

# LONDON-READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1044.—VOL. XII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 5, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["YOU MUST BE INSANE TO COME TO ME WITH SUCH A STORY, MY GOOD GIRL," CRIED THE LAWYER.]

## HELEN'S DILEMMA.

### CHAPTER I.

#### HOMEWARD BOUND.

It is four o'clock in the afternoon on board the P. and O. s.s. *Carnatic*. Under the awning on deck more than a hundred passengers are sitting, standing, lounging, and walking, having come up to look for a little breeze to stimulate their appetites for dinner; for are they not under a tropical heat, and in the Red Sea?

The Red Sea is at present as smooth as glass, as the ship goes throbbing through the water. Overhead the sky is blue and cloudless.

The African and Arabian coasts (dimly visible on either side) are of another and fainter shade of blue; but neither those far mountains nor the sky itself out-rival the blue eyes of a girl who is down below stairs, sharing a tiny cabin with another fellow-passenger.

The two Miss Browns are no relation to each other. They came on board at Galle—

one from the Australian mail steamer and one from the Madras coaster.

Attracted by their identity of name, and from the fact of each being alone, and both being in mourning, they elected to share the same cabin for the remainder of the journey, and are already fast friends.

Let me take you below and introduce you to them without further delay.

They have found the heat intense. The port-hole yawns as wide as it can—which is not saying much—and one of the young ladies is lying prone in her berth, evidently in the last stage of exhaustion.

She is a pale, refined, delicate-looking girl of about two-and-twenty. She looks as if life had so far been somewhat of a battle, for there are lines of premature care ruled into her forehead, and about the corners of her mouth.

Her hair is loosely pushed back from her aching temples, and her eyes are riveted on her companion, who is standing in the middle of the little cabin with her dress off, her magnificent hair hanging loose and entirely cloaking her down to her knees, and slowly

fanning herself with an enormous black fan embellished with a sunflower.

This is Miss Brown of the blue eyes—Miss Brown the rich orphan—the Australian heiress—the beautiful Miss Brown!

"Did you ever in your life feel anything so baking hot as this afternoon has been? Puff! I wish I might run up on deck like this and get a breath of air!" tossing back her heavy locks, and displaying her bare arms.

"My dear girl!" replied a languid voice from the berth. "You would not call this anything if you had been in India."

"Well, at any rate, you are knocked up—Anglo Indian though you are!" returned the other, triumphantly.

"Ah, but I'm always being knocked up. I'm a wretched specimen of humanity, no more fitted to go out in the world and earn my bread than—than—" pausing for a smile.

"Than the captain's canary," returned her friend, with a smile. "Poor Rachel! you ought to have been rich, according to the fitness of things. You are far from strong—very shy, very quiet, very clever! You would

do beautifully for the rich Miss Brown—and I for the poor one!"

"I don't think you and poverty would agree at all," replied the young lady in the berth, with an air of calm conviction.

"Yes, we should!" retorted the other, emphatically; "far better than you imagine. I am self-reliant, energetic, firm of purpose—unaccustomed to luxuries; for in Tasmania poor papa and I lived very, very quietly; and I have robust health. Yes, I am far fitter to go out into the world and find for myself than you are, my poor dear Rachel!"

"I heartily wish we could change places, then!" said Rachel, with a smile. "I am quite willing to be the rich Miss Brown if you will endow me with all your goods and chattels and the balance at your bankers!"

"You are taken for the heiress, too!" said the other with a nod. "I think nearly everyone on board imagines that you came from Tasmania, and / from Madras!"

"My dear Helen! how can you be so ridiculous?"

"I am not joking; and their mistake is quite natural. You are quiet, retiring, reserved," replied Helen, tossing back her hair, and commencing to pace the cabin. "All that looks like money. You dress better than I do; you wear a diamond ring!" declaiming with the fan. "Whilst I am much more approachable; my wardrobe is sweet simplicity itself, and I am convivial, sociable, and easily amused; so the result is that you, because you hardly open your lips, are treated with deference and respect, and I am patronised and kept in my place!"

"Yet you have ten thousand a year—and I am going home to earn my bread as a governess!" replied the girl in the berth, somewhat bitterly. "You are," she proceeded, slowly, "people do not see the idea, that an heiress has a right to be lonely as Hebe herself. It is not according to the fitness of things fortune should shower all her favours on me. They imagine that I am the heiress because I am plain; and you are a pauper because of your pretty face and great good nature. And you make yourself so cheap, running messages and amusing other people's children!" concluded Miss Rachel Brown, disapprovingly, closing her eyes.

"You don't care about the rising generation, do you?" said Helen, commencing to plait her long locks of ruddy, golden-tinted hair. "Poor soul! I pity you! for yours will be an uncongenial task. Now, I like the little imps!"

"Thank Heaven, there's only one young olive branch for me to look after, in my future situation!" said Rachel, crossing her arms behind her head, and surveying her friend's toilet with languid interest. "I little dreamt that I should ever come down to going out as a governess—but necessity knows no law!"

"I wonder you never married! I thought all girls in India went off, as they call it, as a matter of course," observed the young lady at the glass, now busily winding the massive plait into a knob at the back of her head, and searching vainly for hairpins.

"Married!" echoed the other, with a gasp, and colouring to the brow. "What an absurd idea! Not one out of ten girls in India marry now—the market is overstocked. I went to my brother—my married brother—as I think I told you. I spent five years in the gorgeous East, and here I am going back to Europe like the traditional bad penny."

"And your brother?" said Helen, who had been surveying the back of her head with a hand-glass, and had paused in her inspection.

"My brother is dead! I am alone in the world!" returned the elder Miss Brown, in a low voice.

"Never alone in the world as long as I am in it!" said her companion, kneeling down beside her, and putting a slender arm round her neck. "You know you are my friend; and my friends are so few that I cannot afford to lose sight of them. There! there's the first dinner-bell! Get up, Rachel, darling!"

at once, and I will do your hair. Hurry, or you will be late!"

## CHAPTER II.

"Do you know whom I heard you compared to to-day, Helen?" said her friend, taking a seat beside her on the moonlit deck.

"Have not the faintest idea! The Queen of Sheba—Mrs. Langtry?"

"No, but Clytie—the goddess Clytie. And your profile and the shape of your head do resemble her strongly—the familiar statue, I mean."

"What a compliment! Should you advise me to go in for a classic style of dress?"

"The æsthetic would suit you—a robe of samite, a girdle, and a lily; and, by the way, I do believe, quite seriously, that I am supposed to be the rich Miss Brown. The captain was joking at dinner, and said something about a person with thousands like me! Poor man! if he only knew! this day month my duties will have commenced—I shall be Mrs. Despard's governess."

"Mrs. Despard! how funny! That is the name of my aunt—and not a very common one. Where does your Mrs. Despard live?"

"Near Thornhurst, in Kent. She is a friend of a lady I knew in India, who got me the situation and gave me a splendid character. It seems odd for anyone to take a governess from India, but I am well recommended. I have seen the world, I am accomplished, and I am cheap!"

"Do you know that Mrs. Despard is my aunt? There cannot be two ladies of that name at Thornhurst, can there? So we are actually going to the same house! Well, the world is a small place after all!" said Helen, opening her eyes very wide, and gazing at her companion with all her might.

"The aunt you spoke of—your father's only sister, who wrote you such delightful letters, and seemed so nice!" replied Miss Brown, in a key of the highest amazement. "Impossible!"

"But it is a fact! Our Mrs. Despard is one and the same. Come and I will prove it to you—come down and we'll compare our letters," rising, and hurrying to the top of the companion ladder, and jumping downstairs.

"Here is mine—my last," she said, laying a sheet of foreign paper in the hands of her more deliberate companion, who had followed her into the cabin and shut the door. "Read it and judge for yourself!"

"MY DARLING NIECE,—

"By the time this reaches you you will be on the point of sailing, and I send you one line to tell you that we are actually counting the days till you arrive. Your room is ready; your cousins have been very busy doing it up with blue and white draperies, and making quite a pretty bower for your reception. Your uncle is looking out for a saddle-horse to suit you; and I have heard of an excellent maid, so I think that everything will be in readiness for you when you come among us. You must make up your mind not to think of us as strangers, but as your nearest of kin. We are all looking forward to giving you a hearty welcome and adopting you as one of the family. My Blanche is just your age, twenty last June; I am sure you and she will be like sisters—Ever your affectionate aunt,

"ISABELLA DESPARD."

"P.S.—Your uncle will meet you at Southampton."

"A very charming letter—very much so, indeed," said Rachel, folding it up slowly, and putting it into its envelope. "Now you shall see mine, received just as I was leaving Madras; you see the handwriting is identical."

"DEAR MADAM,—

"Mrs. Phillips tells me that you are leaving India immediately, and that I may expect you about the first of December. I hope she has thoroughly explained my wishes to you, and that you quite understand your duties. You

will have the entire care of a little girl of twelve and her wardrobe, Music, French, English, drawing are, I believe, your acquirements. I shall expect you to read French with my eldest daughter, accompany her in singing, and be as much as possible of a companion to my daughter, who is a confirmed invalid. You will breakfast and dine in the school-room, and take lunch with us—unless we have visitors in the house. All these little things are so much better understood when plainly put down in black and white. You pay for your own washing and travelling expenses—salary twenty-five pounds a year. As you are not certificated, I am sorry I cannot possibly offer you more. I trust that I shall find you are all Mrs. Phillips states.—I remain, yours faithfully,

"ISABELLA DESPARD."

"What a horrid, cold, formal letter!—not the least like mine," said Helen, sitting down on her berth, and embracing her knees with both arms.

"You must remember that you are her rich niece—I am her cheap governess, dear; there is a difference!" said Rachel sarcastically.

"Did Mrs. Phillips tell you anything about my aunt?—what kind of a person she really was?" asked Helen, with a thoughtful face.

"Yes; she told me a great deal about her." "Which you will at once repeat to me," said Helen, eagerly.

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" replied her friend, firmly. "She will be very nice to you, I am sure, and that is all you need care about." To this Helen made no reply, but sat for some moments, still nursing her knees in wrapt contemplation of the carpet.

"I have it!" she cried, at length. "I have a splendid idea!" jumping up and confronting her companion with a face of radiant elation. "Listen to me, Rachel," putting her arm round her waist. "I have the most abject horror of being liked for my money alone, and not for myself. I would give anything for the luxury of feeling that people cared for me for myself—not my fortune. Suppose I go among my relations as the governess—and not as the niece!"

"Helen, you are stark, staring mad!" ejaculated her friend, with an expression of blank amazement.

"But I have method in my madness. I shall not mix up my relations with the governesses. I can play and draw, and read French, although I was educated under the Southern cross. I am also a fine singer—the thing seems beautifully simple!"

"It would be a very unfair deception; your relations would never forgive you—and I for one will have nothing to say to it," said Rachel, quickly.

"Yes, you will!" replied Helen, confidently. "Wait and hear all the pros and cons, before you make up your mind. In the first place"—reckoning on her fingers, and speaking with great animation—"I shall have the opportunity of making friends on my own merits. Secondly, you will have a comfortable and luxurious home, as long as you are in my shoes. You want a rest, you say! You are not strong; and complete idleness and freedom from care and bother will do you no end of good—you can't deny that!"

"You think I shall be entirely free from care whilst I am acting the part you allot me? On the contrary," said Rachel in a mocking voice, "I should have a veritable sword of Damocles hanging over my head. I should be always expecting to be found out. I know none of your connections—nothing about familiar family names!"

"Neither do I!" interrupted her friend triumphantly. "I went out to Tasmania as a child. I am as ignorant of our belongings as you are. Aunt Despard had not written to father for years. She had not the smallest idea that he was a rich man until lately. He told me that he had always been looked upon as the ne'er-do-well of the family, as he made an imprudent marriage and sold out of



the army, and all his people washed their hands of him. He made a grand speculation in buying up land in the neighbourhood of Melbourne, which filled his pockets with gold. And that is his history. Poor, dear father," she added, with tears in her eyes, "he often regretted that he had not gone home and made friends with his sister on my account. He could not bear the idea of leaving me almost alone in the world," she concluded, with quivering lips.

"No one with five thousand a year need ever be alone!" remarked her companion, emphatically. "No, no, you are not to be pitied. You have youth, and health, and beauty, and money. What more would you have? Look at me! I am penniless, friendless, and in wretched health. The doctors say that I have disease of the heart, and may die any day. The sooner the better!" she added, in a hard, unnatural voice.

"Oh, Rachel! how can you say anything so wicked?" exclaimed Helen, aghast.

"My dear, if you had been knocked about as I have by the storms of fate, if you had led a life as miserable as mine, all you would ask would be a painless, quiet death. Life has nothing left to offer me."

"You will think differently some day, Rachel. You are in low spirits; your health affects your mind. The blackest cloud has a silver lining—when things come to the worst they mend."

"My affairs are past mending," returned Rachel, gloomily. "Some day you shall hear the story of my life, Helen, and you shall judge for yourself."

"Tell me now, darling. I know you have some heavy trouble on your mind. Do tell me?" urged Helen, pleadingly.

"Not now, another time," shaking her head inflexibly.

"Well, then, about my plan, will you agree to it? It can do no harm to you. You are obliging me; and I take the whole responsibility upon myself!" spreading out two pretty little white hands.

"And how long do you purpose playing your part, Helen?"

"A month—a whole month! That will give me ample time to ingratiate myself with aunt, uncle, and cousins."

"You silly, silly girl! And at the end of that time may I ask what is to become of me—of the impostor? I shall be turned out on the doorstep, bag and baggage, without wages or character, and my last state will be worse than my first!"

"Your last state will be better than your first. For if they don't take our little 'surprise' in good part, and are not nice people, we will leave together; and you shall be my governess, and have the sole charge of me. So now agree. Do say yes—do, do, darling!" putting her arm round her friend's neck, and giving her half-a-dozen coaxing kisses.

"I don't believe we could act our parts for a single day!" said Rachel, relenting. "You are not qualified to teach, I am certain."

"Yes I am, you rude girl! I can sing, and play, and draw. I had the very best masters from Hobart Town. My French only wants rubbing up. I was born at Boulogne. It is my mother-tongue."

"Well, I shouldn't have thought that teaching was at all in your line!" said Rachel, disbelievingly.

"You will see! Yes; you will see! Remember that I am now the governess in embryo, and you are a young lady from Tasmania. Promise me not to deceive our fellow-passengers—"

"I don't mind them; there is no harm in a little joke as far as they are concerned; but the other scheme is different."

"Tea! young ladies; tea!" said a merry voice outside the door, and a golden fringe and pair of bright eyes were introduced round the door curtain.

"Remember, it is settled!" said Helen, pressing her friend's hand. "I am now going to talk about children, and lessons, and India; I am going to practise my part at

once. In the future," pausing, with her hand on the door handle, and looking back at her companion with a smile, "I am the poor Miss Brown!"

### CHAPTER III.

Helen played her cards so well, and entered into the spirit of her part with such ability and zeal, that her friend was borne away upon the tide of her impetuosity, and obliged to pose in an unresisting, negative way, as the Tasmanian heiress!

"You are carrying the joke too far, Helen," she remonstrated. "I heard you telling half-a-dozen people that you were going to teach a little girl of ten, and asking Mrs. Howard if you could dress on twenty-five pounds a year!"

"She thinks it miserable pay; and so it is! She says she pays her maid forty," said Helen, ignoring her friend's rebuke.

"Well, all I can say is, that you will be sorry for your folly some day, Helen. Once you begin to play with circumstances, you never know where you may end."

"Oh! what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive!" she quoted, gravely.

"It is no use now for me to declare that I am sailing under false colours. I accept the situation for your sake! I accept attentions not intended for me; I even talk of Melbourne, and Tasmania! I hate myself bitterly all the time! But once we land at Southampton, I warn you that I shall cast off these peacock's feathers and be my own homely self—the jackdaw, once more!"

The *Carratic* made her way through the Canal and out into the Mediterranean, which greatly belied its name!

Instead of being blue, it was of a dirty grey; instead of being smooth, it was exceedingly rough—a horrid, chopping sea. Then the wind got up in great force; and under the lee of Cyprus they came in for a stiff gale—a gale that raged, and roared, and blew all day with tremendous violence.

Rachel, prostrate and terrified, lay in her berth, which she had never left since they passed Port Said. She was weak, faint, and refused all food. Helen tended her with affectionate soliloquies, making wonderful struggles to stand and to walk, notwithstanding the violent lurching of the ship and the semi-darkness of the cabin—for the head lights were on, the ports were closed.

Night came on apace. There was a bad sunset. The glass fell still more. The sea became terrific, with thunder, lightning, and torrents of rain; the roaring of the wind, the rattling of the thunder, the frightful rolling of the ship, accompanied by continuous smashes in the saloon and pantries; the boxes, chairs, and even wash-stands, broke from their fixings and dashed about the cabin.

The scene was appalling; the sensation of lurching over, and going down! down! down!—till one never expected to right again—was sickening in the extreme.

Helen knelt by her friend's berth, with one hand in hers, the other holding on convulsively to a brass rail, now and then uttering some soothing little speech, or bathing the invalid's head with a handkerchief soaked in eau de Cologne. The sole light in the cabin was from a candle in a swinging socket, which swayed to and fro in a manner fearful to witness.

The deafening noise overhead made conversation impossible even had Rachel been able to reply to her companion's consolations and words of encouragement. Rachel lay back in her berth, her eyes closed, her lips ashy pale. She breathed in long-drawn gasps, and held Helen's hand as in a vice of iron.

Time went by, still the storm raged. Still Helen knelt on the floor, cold and stiff. The candle had gone out. They were in complete darkness. She laid her head on the edge of the berth and, overcome by fatigue, dozed off into a troubled sleep. She was awakened by a feeble tugging at her sleeve, and roused instantly to her usual alertness.

"Are you there, Helen?" said a voice, so

weak that she had to bend her ear close to the speaker's lips. "You have been very, very kind to me, dear Helen! Heaven bless you always and keep you! Do not deceive your friends!"—a long pause—"I want you to promise me one thing,—bringing out the words with difficulty. "Take care of her. Do not let him find her. Promise me—swear to me!"

"I promise you everything, Rachel, if you will only keep perfectly quiet and try to go to sleep. The wind is really going down. We are not rolling nearly as much as we were," said Helen, soothingly, impressed with the idea that her patient was rambling in her mind.

Again a long silence, broken only by the sound of seas breaking violently on the deck overhead, and the creaking and straining of the ship.

When Helen next awoke daylight, cold and grey, was stealing into the cabin, and revealed everything in the most fearful confusion. The floor strewn with dresses, boxes, books, pillows. She turned her eyes on her companion, who had still retained her hand in a grasp of ice. Her eyes were wide open, fixed and glassy. Her features were rigid—she was dead!

### CHAPTER IV.

THE following afternoon the wind had somewhat abated. The sea had gone down, and the funeral took place. The remains of Rachel Brown were enclosed in a coffin knocked together by the ship's carpenter. Very beautiful she looked in death, as she lay in her coffin with her hands crossed on her breast. Her face had a repose and tranquillity it had lacked in life. Many of the ladies on board visited the cabin of death, and not a few tears were dropped over that marble-like form.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the engines stopped. A bell tolled. Many of the crew and passengers assembled in the gangway whilst the captain read the service for the burial of the dead over the coffin which lay at his feet, covered by the Union Jack. At the words, "We therefore commit her body to the deep," the flag was cast aside, the grating lowered, and all that was mortal of Rachel Brown disappeared from human eye with one sullen splash.

Helen felt the shockingly sudden death of her friend most acutely. She was quite prostrated for several days, and did not appear among her fellow-passengers till they were steaming slowly out of Malta harbour. She then came up shivering, wrapped in a thick woollen shawl, and seated herself outside a circle of ladies, who gladly made room for her, and were all very anxious to hear her version of the late melancholy occurrence.

"How awful for you to be alone with her all night, and she quite dead! The doctors say she was dead at least three hours before you called them. Heart disease!—she always looked delicate. She could not possibly have lived six months!" said one lady, laying her crested down and addressing herself to Helen.

"I wonder who will get all her money," said another, with an air of interested speculation.

"Her money!" echoed Helen, in a low voice. "Why, did you not know that she had thousands a year? She was a Tasmanian heiress—probably her father was a convict!" remarked a faded-looking little woman with sandy hair.

"The captain wrote home to her people, and posted the letter to-day," said the first speaker; "and he has put seals on all her things."

Helen's heart gave a sudden jump as she began to realise the truth. She was now to all intents and purposes "the poor Miss Brown"—the heiress was dead! What would it avail to declare that the whole affair had been a little friendly plot—a mere joke to while away the monotonous days on board ship. Who would believe her?

She hastened down to her former cabin. All Rachel's things were in their places, intact and untouched; but all *hers* had been removed. Her

overland portmanteau, containing letters of credit, a copy of her father's will, photographs, letters, jewellery, and every means of identification was gone! Fortunately she still possessed a travelling-bag containing a considerable sum of money, and a box of under-linen, which had accompanied her to her new cabin.

But what was she to do. To tell the captain? How could she prove her words? She sat down on her empty berth and thought over the whole matter with might and main. If she were to go to him and say, "I am the heiress. I have been deceiving you all along. It was only a joke!" he would naturally say,—

"No, no, young lady—you want to step into the dead girl's shoes—you want to be the rich Miss Brown; but you have mistaken your man. I am not a fool! You told me yourself that you were going out as a governess, and you must stick to your former character."

Her ticket from Melbourne—if she even had that! But all her belongings were naturally in her own boxes—and they were sealed. There was nothing for it but patience; and, if the worst came to the worst, she could only accept the fate she was once so eager to secure, and take up the situation of her aunt's governess.

"You here, Miss Brown?" said the portly stewardess, walking into the cabin. "Ah! it was a terrible shock to you, and you will miss her sorely. She was a nice, quiet young lady, and never gave an atom of trouble, poor dear! She made a lovely corpse! And she had her sorrows, sure enough. I don't think she was a miss at all!" she added, mysteriously.

"What do you mean?" asked Helen, indignantly.

"I just mean *this*!" said the stewardess, diving into her pocket, and fishing out a fat purse, with a brass snap. "See here!" dangling a thin gold chain before Helen's eyes. "Do you see *this*?"—holding out some object between her fat finger and thumb. "I found this chain round her neck, with the wedding-ring fastened to it."

Helen took it in her hand, and turned it over, with a face of blank amazement.

There was no doubt about it; it was a wedding-ring!

#### CHAPTER V.

HELEN found no one to meet her when she landed at Southampton, and made her way alone up to London one miserably cold morning early in December.

She went to a quiet family hotel, recommended to her by a fellow-passenger, and, having selected a bedroom, and seen her two modest boxes safely installed, ordered herself that favourite beverage with all the sex—to wit, a cup of tea.

As she sipped and sipped she tried to devise some fixed plan of action, and, after due consideration, she came to the conclusion that on the morrow she would sally forth and buy some clothes—for her heart recoiled from the dead girl's dresses; then, that she would call on her late father's solicitors, state the true facts of the case, and leave it to them to get her out of her difficulty as best they might.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, she started in a hansom for Oxford and Regent-streets, and made purchases on a very large scale—a scale quite befitting the Tasmanian heiress. She invested in a superb sealskin paletot, price forty guineas, for she felt the cold most acutely; a tailor-made dress, a black satin costume (a French pattern); a hat, bonnet, muff, umbrella, and a good assortment of dainty boots and gloves—in short, she made an immense hole in her little capital of a hundred and twenty pounds.

Very much delighted with her morning's work, she drove to the office of her solicitors, "Messrs. Sharp and Smart," and asked to see the principal of the firm.

She was shown into his presence by a very inky boy, with his pen behind his ear and a broad grin on his countenance, and found an

ill-tempered, not to say wicked-looking, little old man seated at a large, high desk, writing letters on very blue paper. His appearance and his greeting chilled her to the very marrow of her bones. Here would be no kind sympathiser with her folly, but a stern and merciless judge. Briefly and tremblingly she stated her case, without one remark being made by Mr. Sharp, and when she had finished an ominous silence ensued, lasting for quite three minutes.

"A very pretty story, indeed!" said a harsh voice, suddenly. "It does your imagination the highest credit—but it won't go down here. Your fellow-passenger, the wealthy Miss Brown, is dead—and you, the other Miss Brown, see no reason why you should not step into her shoes. I must say you have an uncommon amount of assurance—to say the least of it!"

"But, indeed, I really and truly am Helen Brown!" faltered his miserable client, almost in tears.

"Prove it!" he replied slowly; "prove it, prove it!"

"I can't!" she stammered. "All my boxes are in the captain's care, and sealed up as her property."

"Quite so, considering that they were her property! If they were yours why did you not remonstrate? Why did you allow your goods to be appropriated? You must be insane to come to me with such a cock-and-a-bull story, my good girl! Come, I have no leisure for listening to romances, and I never had a taste that way at any time!"

"But people in Tasmania can swear to me! I am well known out there!" urged Helen, pertinaciously.

"Well, bring home your witnesses, and we will see about it!" said Mr. Sharp, with an unpleasant smile, dipping his pen once more in the ink and preparing to resume his labours.

"I have no money—how can I bring them home?" said Helen, in despair. "Oh, what am I to do?" she added, half to herself, as she clasped her hands together.

"Go and take up your situation, and forget all about this preposterous idea of yours! That's my advice to you—gratis!" said Mr. Sharp, dismissing her with a wave of his hand.

There was nothing for it but to go, and Helen withdrew from the office in a kind of stupor, got into the hansom almost mechanically, and drove back to her hotel.

"What was she to do?" she kept asking herself as she paced her room restlessly from end to end. She had just eleven sovereigns left in her purse. She must pay her hotel bill—her railway fare, if she elected to go to Thornhurst. It seemed the only course open to her. She must accept the rôle of governess—at any rate for the present. It served her right, she could not help thinking, as she sat down and wrote a short note to her aunt announcing her arrival.

The story would be deemed incredible everywhere; she could not prove her identity for at least three months. Meanwhile she could not starve, so the letter was despatched to Thornhurst by the night mail, informing Mrs. Despard that her new governess awaited her pleasure at "Baker's Family Hotel, Jermyn-street, London."

In two days' time a very freezing missive came in reply. "Miss Brown was to lose no more time, but to start for her future home by that afternoon's train, and would be met at Thornhurst Station in due course."

Very speedily Helen made all her arrangements, packed away her new wardrobe, paid her bill, and took her departure. The day was bitterly cold as she glided out of Victoria Station, the solitary occupant of a first-class carriage.

Two hours' travelling brought her to the small station of Kingsford, in Kent—the nearest to her destination. The platform was empty, save for one solitary porter. She alighted and looked about in the vain expectation of seeing some one come to meet her; but

there was not a single creature in sight, and presently the train moved on, leaving her and her luggage entirely alone.

She went into the waiting-room and warmed her frozen feet on the fender, and after some time a rough-looking countryman appeared in the doorway, whip in hand, and said,—

"Be you the young person for Thornhurst—Miss Brown?"

An eager nod was Helen's reply.

"Then come along; I have the tax-cart here. The mistress bid me say she could not send the carriage. The horses have just been clipped, and she was afraid of them standing in the cold."

Five minutes later Helen and her boxes were hoisted into the tax-cart, and the shaggy, unkempt-looking animal between the shafts was bowling them along the road at a very liberal pace, his head being set towards home.

The driver, impressed by his companion's appearance, her low voice, and her magnificent fur coat, was now deferentially attentive, doing the honours of his trap to the best of his ability—giving his fair charge the whole rug to herself and the best cushion, and pointing out as he went along all the places of note.

"That's Foxford, the place over there among the trees, with the two towers. Miss Fox is the great heiress of these parts, has as good as the Bank of England at her back. Her father is a bill-broker."

"I'm afraid I don't know what that is," said Helen, simply.

"Well for you, that never heard of him!" returned her Jehu. "But you have come from foreign parts, I hear?" he added, looking at her compassionately. "You are Miss Loo-Loo's new governess, all the way from India?"

To this Helen made no reply, and he continued,—

"Lord help you! but you'll have a handful with her. She's nearly been the death of five already! She's the most incorrigible, mischievous, impudent—"

"Do you live at Thornhurst?" asked Helen, whose heart sank at this description of her young charge, but who wished to restrain her companion's confidences.

"I do; man and boy, a matter of forty year! I'm Tom Toke the bailiff!"—touching his hat with his forefinger. "The squire he farms a goodish bit himself, and keeps stall-feeders and young cattle, so our hands are generally pretty full. My father was bailiff at Cargew. I was born there. So we be always here in the family!" he added, with some pride.

"And where is Cargew?" asked Helen, more from politeness than from any real desire for information.

"I'll show it to you when we come to the brow of this hill. It was the finest property within these counties till Sir Rupert's father made ducks and drakes of it. Aye, he were a wild 'un, he were!" he added, giving his horse a sharp cut.

"And who is Sir Rupert?" asked Helen, indifferently.

"He is the master's nephew—his only sister's son, Sir Rupert Lynn. He is mostly abroad, as he can't afford to keep up the place; and he won't hear of letting it, beyond the outlying farms and part of the demesne. The house and home part he keeps in his own hands. They say he had a big offer to let it on lease to some rich London shopkeeper, but he wouldn't hear of it. He's terrible proud! He said he'd sooner see the place in ashes! Heaven forgive him!" added Mr. Toke, piously.

"Well, I think he is right. Why should he let his family place for half his lifetime, and go wandering about the world?" said Helen, with decision.

"He wanders about enough as it is! He might just as well have no home, and he would have the satisfaction of the rent in his pocket, if he were not so fearfully proud. I beg pardon, miss! He comes home for a couple of months, and lives in a couple of rooms, rides over the estate, looks into his affairs, and is off again before you can say Jack



Robinson! There it is!" he added, suddenly, pointing with his whip to the low-lying country beneath them. "There you see the woods of Cargew, as far as your eye can reach; and there's the house, half-hidden behind that long belt of trees—that dark, red building with all the chimneys, and the moat."

It was indeed a noble wide-spreading property. No wonder its owner preferred a corner under his own ancient roof than to filling his empty pockets by letting it to a wealthy tenant, thought Helen.

"It's a splendid place, isn't it, miss?" said Toke, with ill-disguised pride. There's hardly another like it between this and London—such an old-fashioned house, they say, is a great curiosity now! And the timber is unparalleled!—bringing out the long word with great triumph. "But there's Sir Rupert's folly again. He won't let a stick be touched. If he was to marry an heiress now—that's the only thing I see for him! Saving as he is, he can make but little headway against the mortgage. Aye, the old gentleman was a fast goer, he was—race-horses, hounds, cards, and the deuce and all knows what besides! Here we are—this is our road," he said, whipping up his steed and whirling round a corner. "We are modern, you see,"—pointing to a large white building, visible through the trees at one side of the lane—"but it's a pretty tidy place, and lots of good sound land," he added, complacently.

Helen gazed eagerly at her future home, which stood on a slight elevation, and was surrounded by terraces dotted with a considerable amount of white vases and statues. It was a large, uninteresting-looking mansion, with many regular rows of windows, and a heavy, pillared porch.

They soon were winding up the neatly kept avenue, enclosed on either side by deep, well-shorn banks, and within five minutes had come to a halt in front of the hall-door.

Mr. Toke descended heavily, and administered a hearty pull to the bell, which was presently responded to by a footman in a brown livery with a scarlet waistcoat, looking for all the world like a supercilious robin red-breast—in point of fact, he had been disturbed at his five o'clock tea.

"Oh! so it's you, Mr. Toke," he said, glaring at the bailiff, who was in the act of clapping his arms across his breast with great velocity, and stamping with his feet to restore them to animation. "I might have known it by the ring. So this is the young lady! If you'll get down, miss, your boxes will be seen to. Mrs. Despard is in the drawing-room. Who shall I say?" he asked, condescendingly.

"Say Miss Brown!" replied Helen, who, benumbed with cold, had descended with great difficulty, and was only half across the hall when he flung open a door, and announced her.

She was aware of a rustling, and a rising in the dim room, a little smothered laughter, and a manly voice saying,—

"Oh, no! I say! let's have her in here, and have a look at her first!"

"Hush—h—h!" said another; "she will hear you!" And, indeed, Helen was already on the threshold.

"How do you do?" asked a thin, frosty tone, and a tall, elderly lady rose to receive her. "You must have had a cold drive, I am afraid! My daughter, Miss Despard!" indicating a young lady, who was seated in a low chair near the fire, and who merely bowed her head in acknowledgment of the introduction. "My son, Mr. Augustus Despard!" continued the hostess, and a young man, who had hitherto been lounging on the sofa chewing a toothpick, now arose, came forward, and pressing Helen's hand very cordially, stared hard into her face, but it was far too dark to be able to tell one feature from another.

After a few languid inquiries about Helen's journey Mrs. Despard rang the bell, and shortly afterwards two footmen entered—one carrying lamps and the other the tea equipage. A little folding table was wheeled before the

mistress of the house, covered with a creel-worked tea-cloth, and a silver tray, laden with an exquisite tea-set of dark blue and white china, laid upon it.

Wafer-thin bread-and-butter and seed cake were added to the repast, and the footmen silently withdrew.

Now that there was plenty of light Helen looked curiously round. The room they were in was large, lofty, and magnificently furnished according to the latest code.

The walls and carpets were palest grey; the chairs, mirrors, cabinets, and lounges were in black and gold; the draperies deep crimson velvet or silk. Water-coloured sketches and plaques of old china half covered and concealed the walls.

An open piano, scattered over with music, stood in one corner, a huge *jardiniere* crammed with the rarest exotics in another. Various valuable *objets de art* were carelessly arranged on tables or in cabinets; and everywhere the eye ranged was evidence of taste, luxury, and money.

Helen glanced at her aunt, who was pouring out tea. She was a handsome, elderly woman, with severe dark eyes, a well-cut nose, and an exceedingly firm mouth and jaw.

A little coquettish headress crowned her still abundant tresses. A fashionably-made maroon silk, with quantities of lace ruffles about her throat and wrists, was her costume, and the strong, white hand that held the teapot was loaded with sparkling rings.

Blanche had moved a little way from the fire, but still leant back in her chair in an attitude of luxurious repose, her feet crossed before her on the fender still, and displayed with most liberal generosity; her book face downwards in her lap, and her eyes riveted on Helen.

She was apparently about twenty-five years of age, slight, fair, and very pale; her hair was profuse, and of a light sandy colour, and was worn in an enormous fringe; her brows and lashes were almost white, her eyes the palest grey; her nose insignificant; her one redeeming feature was her mouth, which came between an exceedingly short upper lip and a very pointed chin. Still, with all its advantages, it was a soured, ill-tempered mouth, and capable of saying exceedingly bitter things—and many a falsehood had emerged from those pretty little lips.

Miss Despard was dressed in a brown velvet dress, which fitted her slender figure to perfection. Deep lace cuffs were turned back over her tight sleeves, and a deep lace tie was coquettishly knotted *à la cavalier* under her chin, and fastened by a diamond fly.

Mr. Augustus Despard was fair, like his sister. His hair and eyebrows nearly white, his moustache (of which he was ridiculously proud) of a reddish hue. In figure he was small; his dress was the result of the most studied care; purple and fine linen, and the gold of Ophir contributed to his adornment. His cuffs were striking; his collar so high and so tight, that he seemed half-choked, and his little, pale blue orbs (which were naturally prominent) were almost starting out of his head; but if art had done much for this young gentleman, Nature had bestowed her favours with a niggard hand. His face was singularly plain; nothing could well be more unattractive.

He was reclining on the sofa in an easy attitude, caressing his little red moustache with his gemmy fingers, and staring at his mother's governess with all the eye-power at his command.

"She is a stunner—a ripper!" he ejaculated to himself, and quite worthy to be blessed with his most immediate attentions. His mother and sister's orbs have not been idle either.

They have been working at their new acquaintance with most unqualified amazement, tempered with a strong seasoning of displeasure.

This girl, with the purely Grecian profile, the low voice, the sweet eyes, is by no means

what they could have wished for as an inmate. Supposing Dolly were to lose his head about her? Supposing Rupert were to see her? Supposing all manner of abominable things!

Helen suddenly met her aunt's inquisitorial eye, and coloured painfully.

"You are not the least like what I expected, Miss Brown!" said Mrs. Despard, with a curious smile. "You are much younger than Mrs. Phillips led me to expect, and much more—ah—remarkable looking!"

"In short, my mother wishes you to understand that you're a deuced sight too good-looking!" put Dolly, with an air of easy frankness.

"You look wonderfully well considering you have spent five years in India!" proceeded Mrs. Despard. "You have quite a pure, English complexion!" resentfully. Helen's complexion became of a very deep crimson tint at this remark; and Mrs. Despard changed the conversation by saying, "By-the-bye, you came home in the *Carnatic* with my late niece, Miss Brown; it was a very sudden thing, was it not? Very sad, too!" with a society sigh.

"Very sudden, indeed!" replied Helen, glancing at Mrs. Despard's coloured gown—not a scrap of black, no semblance of mourning.

Mrs. Despard was a clever woman, and rapidly interpreted that expressive look.

"Poor girl! you see she had no friends or relations in the country but ourselves. So as we would not be hurting anyone's feelings, we did not mind going into black. We never saw her; and we had just got all our winter things. It would have been so excessively inconvenient."

"I wonder who will come in for her money!" said Miss Despard, gazing speculatively at the fire. "You ought to, mamma," she added, with conviction.

"Did she seem a liberal kind of party? Did she speak of us with affection on board ship. Eh?" inquired Dolly, with would-be wit. "Was she free with her coin?"

"Really I am the last person to give you any information on that point," stammered Helen, stroking her muff with nervous fingers. "Perhaps, as Miss Brown has had a long journey, she would like to go to her room," said Mrs. Despard, after a rather long silence. "Blanche, my dear, will you take her upstairs, if you don't mind?"

Blanche uprooted herself from her easy-chair with anything but a good grace, and led the way from the room, with great dignity of demeanour, up a wide, shallow staircase, carpeted with carpets as thick and soft as moss, along a corridor through a swing door, and up another flight without any carpets at all; finally, into a large, bare—very bare and bleak-looking—room. A small iron bedstead on a carpet island, amidst a waste of bare boards; a shabby, rickety, painted wardrobe occupied a niche near the wall, a painted dressing-table stood between the windows; the fire-place was empty; no attempt at luxury or comfort was visible, and the only decoration the apartment boasted was Miss Thompson's well-known tent-pegging picture, "Missed," probable value—half-a-crown.

"This is your room," said Blanche, waving a candlestick round. (How different to the promised bower of white and blue!) "Take off your things, and I will introduce you to Loo-Loo and Katie. By the way, did you get that sealskin paletot in India? You never did, I'm sure!"

"No; I bought it in London two days ago."

"Bought it in London! You never mean to say so! Why it must have cost fifty guineas at the very least."

"No; only forty," replied Helen, removing it, and laying it on the bed.

"Only forty! Well, I must say that a young lady who can give that price for a winter jacket should have no need to go out as a governess!" sneered Miss Blanche.

"I was very foolish to buy it, I now know to my cost," said Helen, humbly; "but I—I

was tempted, I felt the cold so fearfully; and I thought I could afford it at the time, and afterwards discovered my mistake!"

"So I should imagine," said the other with conviction. "I wonder if it would fit me!" walking over to the bed, and proceeding to try it on. "Yes; it's not bad. I'll tell you what! I'll let you have five-and-twenty guineas for it, if you like!" said Blanche, eyeing herself in the glass, and smoothing down the fur with much complacency.

Five-and-twenty guineas for a jacket that cost forty two days previously! Here was a noble offer! Was this the girl who was to have been, as it were, a sister to her?—this mean creature, who would trade on the necessities of a poor governess! Never!

"No thank you; as I have it, I will keep it," replied Helen, with forced composure, and a visibly heightened colour.

"Ah! well; I daresay some day you will be sorry you did not take my offer; it is not every one that will buy a second-hand article!" handing the coveted coat to its owner with an air of great annoyance, who forthwith proceeded to hang it up in the rickety wardrobe. "And now, if you are ready, we will go down to the schoolroom."

(To be continued.)

## THE LOST STAR.

### CHAPTER XL.

ALVERLEY drew a deep breath as the star, which had cost him the greatest sorrow of his life, shone with the radiance of a meteor on the shabby green cloth.

"Oh! Ruby, my lost Ruby, success has come too late!" he thought to himself, as he contemplated its brilliance in profound and disappointing silence.

If it had but come a month or two ago, surely he might have won the day over the new lover in the lane at Sunnyside; but even now it was worth ten thousand times its value, for its discovery would remove the shadow from her life, though it could not lighten the cloud which had fallen on his own.

"Well, isn't it a real out-and-outer?" exclaimed Godson, enthusiastically, as he bent over his treasure with glowing eyes. "Doesn't it twinkle and shine with a wicked wink of its own, and don't it look as if it ought to be in a palace?"

"Yes, it isn't bad," secretly drawing a star of mock diamonds out of his pocket. "How did you come by it?"

Godson put his finger to his nose, and looked cunning.

"I was sharp enough to get it, and sharp enough to keep it too. When money runs short, and I want my dinner very bad, I sell some of the other things; but," shaking his head, "not this. I know a pretty lady, and I mean to put it one day in her soft, bright hair. It will look very well, and she's sure to be pleased. Don't you think she's sure to be pleased?"

"Quite sure. But where is she?"

All the brightness faded from his face; his cheeks seemed to sink, as they turned a sickly yellow, and his restless eyes grew heavy and dull.

"I can't find her," he said, hoarsely, "but I mean to one day, if I spend all my life in looking for her."

Alverley suddenly placed a photograph of Ruby St. Heliers, which he had procured by a stratagem, in front of Godson's eyes.

The effect was electrical. The poor fellow, whose delusion had only gathered strength with time, clutched at it wildly, almost sobbing with delight.

He caught it from Alverley's hand, and pressed it over and over again to his lips, the tears running down his cheeks; his sunken chest heaving.

Strongly objecting to the desecration of Ruby's picture, and yet conscious of a fellow-

feeling with the crazed lover, Alverley changed the stars as quickly as possible, and then insisted upon regaining possession of the photograph.

Godson hung on to it, as a drowning man to a spar, entreating to be allowed to keep it if only for half-a-day.

"You don't know what she is to me," crying like a child. "She's an angel, a goddess. I could lie down on the ground for her to walk over me. I could follow her through fire or ice. I could be so happy with only one word or one smile from her pretty lips. I could die, indeed I could, to-morrow to make her be as she was before, with everything bright and pretty around her. She ought to be the queen of the land, and I've heard tell she's sought but a poor hard-worked governess. Oh! let me keep it, sir!"

"I can't, it is the only one I have," replacing it inside his waistcoat, as the only place that was safe from Godson's agile fingers. "But I will tell you what she would wish if she were here"—the other looked up eagerly—"that you should go back to your home in Devonshire, and wait there till she comes to see you."

Godson shook his head.

"She wouldn't come. I waited till I could wait no longer. I followed her down to a big house, and saw her on the ice, but she took no notice of me. She was laughing with a great hulking fellow, who took no more care of her than if she had been a cow. And then she was thrown down, and they couldn't get her skates off; but I knew how, and I longed to carry her in my arms over the snow, but the others got between."

He stopped, lost in thought.

Alverley pitied him from the bottom of his heart, as he stood in a listless attitude, leaning against the table, arrayed in his tattered dressing-gown.

They were both wrecked on the same rock, but Providence had granted him better wits wherewith to weather the storm.

As he shook hands with him, he left a ten-pound note in Godson's hand, in case dinners should run short again before his father found him out.

The policemen were told simply to keep an eye on him, to see that he came to no harm; and the warrant was torn up as wholly unnecessary.

After making himself a little more presentable in his own lodgings, he drove to his father's town-house in Chesterfield-gardens, and caught his mother and sister as they were just on the point of starting for an evening party.

"Where is my father?" he inquired directly, after embracing them both.

"In the library. What do you want with him? Has anything happened?" and the Countess looked anxiously into his worn face.

Dissipation had told upon his health; there were dark circles round his eyes, and his cheeks were colourless. There was enough in his appearance to make a mother's heart sad.

"I have good news for you, but I don't want to have to tell the story twice. Clem, should you mind running down to him, and telling him that I have something important to communicate. I wouldn't ask you, but he would come up for you, and not for me."

"Lazy boy, that is only an excuse!" said Lady Clementina, with a smile, as in a gorgeous dress of black satin and gold brocade she walked slowly across the velvet pile carpet, surveying herself in every mirror that she passed on her way to the door.

"You look tired out already!" and Lady Chester pushed back a stray lock from his forehead, wishing that he were not such a stranger in his own home. "If you are not coming with us, I wish you would oblige me for once, and go straight home to bed."

"Bed!" he echoed, with a laugh, "why, I should think I was dreadfully ill if I did, and Phillips would assuredly run for the doctor."

"You will be ill if you don't. Oh, my boy,

what would I not give to see you happily married!" laying her hand fondly on his arm.

"Between you, you have done the best you could to ruin my only chance. Oh! here's my father," going to meet him, and shaking hands, though there was but little cordiality between them: "I won't detain you longer than I can help."

The Countess sank down on a sofa, Clementina on an ottoman. Alverley threw himself into an armchair, whilst the Earl, with a reserved expression on his haughty, patrician face, occupied his favourite position on the hearth-rug.

All listened with rapt attention whilst the story was told, interrupting every now and then with a question or exclamation; and the tears were standing in Lady Chester's eyes long before it was finished.

"So here it is, after all these months, rescued from the clutches of a kleptomaniac!" and he laid the long lost star on his mother's knee.

The Earl stepped forward, and examined it curiously, as if expecting to find it a fraud.

"Instead of playing off a juggler's trick on the man," he said, coldly, "you would have done much better to have placed the matter in the hands of the police, and had him arrested in due form."

"I think it would have been cruel to drag the poor fellow before a court of justice, when he could not be considered accountable for his actions. The next thing to be done is to communicate with his father, and to give him a hint that he had better come up at once and look after him."

"I can get his address from Miss St. Heliers—Violet, I mean," as her son looked up in surprise. "My dear boy, I don't know how to thank you enough for all you have done. I am sure I never expected to see my star again."

"Remember it is to be kept in the strong-room for the future," said the Earl, severely; its recovery having reminded him forcibly of the false position in which he had placed himself, as well as the unfortunate girl whom he had suspected of its theft.

"Some one ought to write to Miss Ruby St. Heliers," and Lady Clementina looked across at her mother. "Poor thing, how sorry I was for her!"

Lord Alverley smiled. "She is not a poor thing now, but very rich—mistress, I believe, of one of the finest estates in Berkshire."

"Have you seen her?" breathlessly from his mother and sister, whilst three pair of eyes were fixed on him with eager curiosity.

"Yes, I saw her," speaking very slowly; "but she would have nothing to say to me—evidently the family was out of favour."

"Did you tell Violet? She is longing to know where her sister is," and Lady Clementina rose from her seat.

"No, it was her secret, not mine; and I only found her out by accident."

"The horses have been waiting long enough," from the Earl.

"Yes, and I must be off," said Alverley, starting up. "Good-bye, mother; goodness only knows when we shall meet again."

"Are you going to-morrow?" with an unmistakable accent of regret. "And we have seen nothing of you for the last two months."

"Come with us to-night. You must have had a card; and the Dimesdales used to be great friends of yours."

"My dear girl, I have half-a-hundred things to see after."

"Never mind. Phillips will manage very well without you, and you know you wouldn't do anything more to-night. Come for once."

Black sheep like to be petted, and the affectionate treatment was the more prized, because it was unusual. Alverley yielded, perhaps because she had said a kind word for Ruby; but on the express stipulation that he should be released in half-an-hour. It was years since he had been out with his mother and sister, and he felt quite odd as he took his place on the back seat of the carriage.

(Continued on page 20)



## MY HERO.

He must be tall, with a noble air,  
An open brow, smooth, broad, and fair;  
And eyes in whose dark depths rest  
A tender, strong, and protective light,  
Woman's sweetness and manhood's might,  
And all that is noblest and best.

He must be brave, and he must be  
Neither too young or too old for me,  
But in manhood's golden pride;  
Young enough my pleasures to share,  
Old enough to trust to his care—  
My love and my life to guide.

His voice must be musical, full, and deep,  
And I care not if through his dark hair creep  
A few threads of silver spun;  
For they will tell of some anxious thought,  
Mayhap of a battle hardly fought—  
And a victory hardly won.

I would not say on the battlefield—  
Sometimes foes too easily yield,  
For a triumph to be grand;  
But a war of passion's resistless course,  
Overcome by a strong will's force,  
Confined with a mighty hand.

I care not if I have long to wait  
Until he come—if wild by fate—  
As my king, for aye, to be crowned;  
But when he first my brow shall press,  
Proudly to all will I confess,  
That I my hero have found!

M. S.

## WILFUL, BUT LOVING.

## CHAPTER XVII.

As we have said, a crowd gathered round the beautiful *prima donna*. Herbert had hard work to make his way through it, supporting his fair burden. His one object, his one aim, was to bear his darling away before the Earl of St. Clare became aware of what had taken place. He managed skilfully.

Among the group of sympathisers he recognized Mrs. Fane. To her he spoke a few whispered words, and her answer was warm and prompt.

"Certainly! the carriage is here. I will take her home at once."

It was Lord St. Clare's carriage, the brougham which might have been her own; but Herbert was unconscious of this. He accepted Mrs. Fane's kindness gratefully, and in less than five minutes the beautiful, lonely wanderer was being driven rapidly home, the Hon. Beatrice Fane at her side.

The air which fanned her temples, the gentle motion of the carriage, and the tender chafing of her hands by her companion had their effect. In a little time Mademoiselle D'Arcy opened her eyes.

"Did I faint? It was very stupid of me!"

Beatrice Fane smiled.

"You are better now, so we will not scold you. Mr. Cecil has hurried on to explain your illness to your uncle and aunt, and I am taking you home."

"It is very good of you!"

Mrs. Fane smiled kindly.

"I have derived so much pleasure from your talents, it would be hard, indeed, if I could not show you a little courtesy in return!"

"But I am one of those women on the stage, you know, and they have all sorts of tricks and arts."

"I think I understand now what made you faint. You heard some one speaking cruelly of yourself, Mademoiselle, the prejudice of narrow-minded people should not hurt you! All those who have talent to appreciate art, and discernment enough to recognize the purity and simplicity of your life, will acquit you of any artifice, and see in you only a beautiful woman of genius!"

"It was foolish of me to mind!" confessed the young singer; "but she said it so cruelly, so scornfully! She was sitting on the next bench to me. I think she knew I was there!"

"Who said it, Mademoiselle D'Arcy?"

"Lady Elinger Law."

"Oh!"

She understood it all. She knew the Lady Elinger wished to be Countess of St. Clare. It had been whispered to her that her brother admired the trembling girl beside her. Beatrice Fane had made a love-match herself, and been profoundly happy. She thought Alan's life would be more joyous with this talented young creature for his wife than if he spent it *tit-for-tat* with Lady Elinger; but she had too much tact even to mention the Earl's name.

"You know everyone!" she said, at length. "Why, I find Mr. Cecil is an old friend of yours. We used to look on him as our exclusive property."

"He has been very kind to me."

Two suspicious red spots burned on the white cheeks, and Mrs. Fane, in common pity, had to drop the subject of the young author.

She found him waiting at Rosebank to see them arrive. She herself did not leave the carriage.

She parted from the young *prima donna* with real regret.

"She will marry Herbert; anyone could see it by the way her face changed when he was mentioned. Well, he will have a lovely wife; but good and true as he is, I think he is a little bit too old and sober for a beautiful young creature like that!"

And, meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy, in no little anxiety, were listening to their niece's declaration that she was quite well; it was only the heat which made her faint, &c., &c.

At last they were prevailed on to leave her alone to rest on the sofa, and an hour or so later, believing her assurance that she only wanted rest and quiet, the kind-hearted pair went out for their usual Sunday evening walk, Herbert Cecil starting with them.

"He might have wished me good-bye!" thought the girl, resentfully, as she saw him walk down the step. "He is the only person in the world who knows my secret. He might give me a little sympathy!"

But she had misjudged him.

He had only accompanied his hosts to the end of the road, and watched them out of sight.

Then he returned, slowly and thoughtfully, to Rosebank. The servant admitted him at once.

She did not even trouble herself to announce one who was such a very frequent visitor; so Herbert turned the handle of the drawing-room door, and went in unexpecting into the presence of his divinity.

She was lying on the sofa, and her face had lost its smile; her blue eyes had tears on their long lashes; her expression was that of a sorrowful, disappointed child.

Herbert went up to her eagerly.

"Beatrice!"

She opened her eyes and fixed them on his face.

"I thought you were gone!"

"Without seeing you?"

"Yes."

He drew a chair up to the sofa and sat down.

"Do you remember a day—nearly a year ago—Beatrice, at Colville-road, when we sat alone together, even as we do now?"

"Yes."

"I told you then that I loved you—that my one wish was to marry you!"

"And I trusted you with the secret of my life—of why, for me, there never could be a question of love or marriage."

"And you think so now?"

"I think that no life can hold two loves," she answered, slowly.

There came a long pause.

He hardly dared to trust himself to speak,

and yet he knew, if his past treachery was ever to avail him, now was the time to reap the benefit of it.

"You told me much—chance revealed to me more, my darling. I pitied you from my heart as Dora Clifford; as Beatrice D'Arcy I love you with a devotion no time can change. Must Alan Lord St. Clare for ever stand between us?"

"You misunderstand," and her voice was almost inaudible. "He will marry Lady Elinger Law! And now I know him as he is, I am glad he never cared for me!"

"You cannot live alone!" said Herbert, hoarsely. "Beatrice, for you to live without love is an impossibility. You are not asked to give it, my darling, only to receive it. Accept the devotion of my heart; give me the right to stand between you and every sorrow, to take what care of your life and strength. I may—"

"You do not know what you are asking."

"I think I do."

"I shall never love anyone again!"

"I would rather have you even so," he said, brokenly, "than lose you! After all," he went on, after a pause, "there would be more love in the union than is often seen nowadays. Of all the marriages that take place, in how many does true love reign on both sides? Of those who stand together at the altar too often it is with them as it would be with us—one loves, the other allows themselves to be loved."

"And you would be content?"

"Content! I should be happy—gloriously, madly, bewilderingly happy!"

"And you would let me sing?"

He had not expected this. He bit his lip.

"I would let you sing until love of home had driven love of art from your heart. Oh! my darling! be merciful, and give me an answer—give me a word of hope!"

She half raised herself on her pillow—she never blushed or hesitated, she spoke quite simply and straightforwardly—as calmly, too, as though the matter had been connected with any subject in the world rather than love and marriage!

"My own life is spoilt—real happiness I never can expect—but that is no reason I should seek to spoil another's. If you think you would be happier with the little I can give—if our old relation of friends will not content you—then let it be as you will, only—"

"My darling!" he murmured, joyously.

"Only," she repeated, gravely, "do not forget why I consent; do me this kindness to remember from the first I told you I had nothing to offer you but friendship."

"Love will come in time," he answered, fondly; "and I am content to wait."

A great silence fell on them. He was thinking of the pretty nest he should make for his bright, beautiful darling—of how he should win fame and riches for her sake—how, by dint of sheer devotion, he should win her love, and make her so happy that the remembrance of his treachery would cease to torture her. And she, poor, lonely child, was wondering why this half-spoken consent seemed to place her miles further from Alan than she had been before. Never, from the moment of Herbert Cecil's revelation, had she felt any hope of passing her life at Alan's side. Yesterday she had scorned his compliments, and yet now it filled her with an uncontrollable anguish to think that by her own will and deed she was about to raise a barrier between them for all time.

Oh! sisters mine! Oh! girls, who read this story! love will come to each one of you in time—love, the greatest, sweetest gift of life! Until you feel that love warm within your heart accept no man for a husband; and if the pain, the cruel disappointment be yours of loving without return, then marry no other man until you have conquered your unlucky love completely, and rooted it, root and branch, from your heart.

There is no portion, no degradation on this earth like to the position of a girl who, loving

one man with all her heart, is yet bound by her own word to another. She must lose all self-respect, all peace; there is nothing for her but certain misery. And so this poor wanderer of ours, whose love had been so unfortunate, whose heart ached with such a weary pain, fancied that in Herbert Cecil's affection she should find a balm for her sorrow—poor, mistaken, self-deluded child!

He sat and watched her until the long summer's day began to fade, and then he rose abruptly.

"I will come to-morrow and see Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy, Beatrice. Darling, I shall always call you so, I want to forget all memory of the time when you were Dora Clifford."

"Good-night!"

She gave him her hand—if he had expected a warmer farewell he was mistaken. The little snowflake of a hand lay in his broad palm for a moment, then he bent and kissed it.

"If I can help it, my darling, as Heaven is above us, you shall never repent giving me this!"

Left alone, the girl could hardly persuade herself the whole scene was not a dream. Was she really going to be married, and to Herbert Cecil—the man who had given her a wedding present when he thought that in three days' time she would be another's wife?

She put her hand to her bosom, abstractedly. Yes, there was the gold chain, with the rare Eastern locket as its pendant. Through all the months that had elapsed since she received that gift Beatrice had never ceased to wear it—all the time she had had hardest thoughts of Alan his picture hung upon her neck.

And now?

Of her own act and deed she had made the wearing of that picture a sin. She unfastened the snap, and, slipping the jewel from the chain, held it for a moment in her hand.

She pressed a spring, and opened the locket. Alan's picture stood revealed before her—the face first seen in the dull, formal, school drawing-room—the face that had dwelt in her memory ever since.

Oh! could it be less than two years ago that she had been Miss Mace's little, shy, unformed pupil teacher? How gladly she would have gone back to that weary, monotonous routine now, if only by so doing she could have eased her heart of the burden that hung on it like a weight of lead.

Once, twice Beatrice tried to take the likeness from its place, but her courage, her resolution failed her; the girl who had spoken such scornful words to Lord St. Clare yet cherished his picture as her greatest treasure.

"When I am his wife," she murmured, thinking of Herbert, "when I bear his name I will cherish no memorials of the past, but still then surely I am free! no one will ever know, and, if I like to prolong the agony of the parting, I shall be the only sufferer."

Enter Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy and supper.

Beatrice arose abruptly, protested she was quite well, took her accustomed place at the evening meal, and was the life of the little party.

Mrs. D'Arcy believed her favourite quite restored, and was delighted at her gaiety, but the musician saw deeper. His simple-minded wife might not know the difference between real and forced merriment, but he could tell it at once. Why, the very sound of the child's laugh, the very ring of her voice, told him that all the brilliant sallies were but efforts to hide the sorrow which consumed her. He loved Beatrice dearly, and he saw clearly she was unhappy. Young, fair, the darling of the London season, with a brilliant career and great prospective wealth before her, what could be troubling her? Mike went back to a little episode in his life before he married Mrs. D'Arcy. He saw in fancy's eye a delicate little wife, with blue eyes like Beatrice's, bidding him adieu, and himself brushing his eyes with a shabby coat-sleeve a week later as he followed her to the grave. His life held a

hidden romance; he guessed his adopted child's did too—the angel which troubled the calm of her life was surely love.

Who could it be?

He had no idea, no suspicion; to him it seemed that she had only to choose among a crowd of suitors. Of one thing he felt pretty sure—no living man could resist the tenderness of those blue eyes.

"I'm going to sit up and smoke a bit," he announced, when supper had been cleared away, and his wife began lighting her candle to go to bed. "You ought to be quite fresh after your long rest, my dear," stroking the girl's fair head; "suppose you sit up and talk to me?"

"Do, Beatrice!" said the mistress of the house, imploringly. "I'm scared to death to leave him up alone—ten to one he'd forget to turn out the gas, and leave it a-barking and flaring away all night!"

She said a cheerful "Good-night!" and went away.

Presently a great stillness settled on the house. The servants had gone to bed; there was no one downstairs except the two who were holding their vigil in the drawing-room, and of these two neither spoke. D'Arcy puffed away at his pipe, sending clouds of curling blue smoke into the air. Beatrice sat on a low stool at his feet, wondering in what words to break to him the news she had to tell.

He helped her unconsciously.

"You look dull, child! I hope you weren't lonely while we were out?"

"Oh, no! Mr. Cecil came back. He had only just gone when you came in."

"He must have been here two hours, then! Very thoughtful of him, when he knew you were tired and wanted to rest."

"Uncle!" began Beatrice, quickly, "do you like Mr. Cecil—don't you think he's a good man?"

The musician understood then quite well what was coming.

"I think he's a good, true man, my dear; a little grave and over serious, perhaps, but then that comes natural to his profession. A first-rate man to make a friend of, child, only—"

"Only!" she repeated.

"He's over old and grave to be anything more than a friend to you, and I'm thinking, my dear, if he comes here so often we shall have the autumn trouble over again. Don't you remember, Beatrice, how disappointed your aunt was when Mr. Cecil went away?"

"Yes."

"We sent you away not long after, I think to Yale. Don't you remember?"

Remember! Why, she could never forget that sweet pleasure.

"And so, Beatrice," went on Michael, puffing away the while, and trying hard to speak in an indifferent tone, "it came into my head to-night that maybe if Mr. Cecil came so often we should be having the old difficulty again, and maybe I'd better give him a hint."

She shook her head.

"You mustn't do that."

"Have you changed your mind, my dear? Don't be ashamed to tell me if you have. There's many a girl afraid to say 'yes,' the first time she's asked the question, who's regretted her 'no' before it was well spoken."

"I don't think I have changed," said the girl, slowly. "But Mr. Cecil is very fond of me, and I have promised to marry him."

Michael dropped his pipe, his voice told him she did not look forward to this marriage with any joy; he wanted to know what had made her consent to it.

"My little girl," he said, fondly, "it's good to be pitiful and kind, but there's one thing in which we ought to think of ourselves. If you haven't got that feeling for Mr. Cecil a wife should have for her husband, don't you go and marry him; it's just sacrificing your happiness to save him a passing sorrow, and, maybe, preparing a bitter sorrow for him in the future."

She shook her head wearily.

"He says he is content with what I can give

him. Indeed, Uncle Mike, I think I can make him happy."

"And who is to make you happy?" demanded Michael, quietly.

"I have my art."

"You have your art now; you are free and untrammelled, Beatrice. Unless you love Mr. Cecil you are better off by far as you are. You will be giving up art, freedom, fame, and wealth for nothing. I tell you, child, you will be a sorrowful, disappointed woman."

She shook her head.

"I shall have my art too. I made him promise that, and he will be happy. So few people can have what they want in this world, Uncle Mike; I think to give just one the thing he covets must make me glad."

D'Arcy put down his empty pipe.

"It goes against the grain with me," he said, simply. "I fear, my dear, you will regret spoiling your life. I've heard of girls marrying for love—for money, rank, ambition; even spite; but not one of these applies to your match with Mr. Cecil. The more I think of it the more puzzled I grow. What can have driven you into such an engagement? Tell me!"

"He wants me!" she whispered, "and I think I can make him happy."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It burst upon the artistic and theatrical world like a thunderbolt, the news that Mademoiselle D'Arcy, of the Prince's Opera House, was engaged to Mr. Herbert Cecil, author of high family and unblemished reputation, it is true, but also of strictly limited means.

"It must be a love-match!" decided the world, with one voice. "With her beauty and talents she would surely never throw herself away like that unless she were completely infatuated!"

Mr. Gordon took the news almost as a personal misfortune until Beatrice told him, in her simple, decided manner, that while he pleased she would be willing to sing for him, married or single.

"But there will be someone else to settle that, young lady. Mr. Cecil may prove himself jealous of his wife's society."

She never blushed or smiled—if she had been engaged once a month for a year she could not have taken the whole affair more prosaically.

"I have quite decided to remain on the stage. Mr. Cecil has given his consent; and, besides, you know, we shall not be married for ages and ages!"

The manager laughed; he really could not help it, but he smothered his merriment at once, and said, courteously,—

"You must allow me to doubt that last statement. I do not think Mr. Cecil will care to wait long for his wife, especially as he must know how many men are envying him!"

But Beatrice had a strange determination respecting the date of her wedding. She did not wish the bells to ring for her until they had already chimed a marriage peal for the Earl and Countess of St. Clare. She could not put this into words, but she would hear of no preparations, no discussions. She had long ago repaid her debt to Mr. D'Arcy. When the Prince's Opera closed at the end of July the little family deserted Rosebank, and returned to their humbler home in the Colville-road. For more than two months the *prima donna* would enjoy a holiday; then she was due at a great continental capital, where she would spend the winter.

Her lover came nearly every day; he was just as devoted and studious of her pleasure as before he wrung from her that hardly won consent. But he was ill at ease; he seemed no nearer his goal. His *fiancée* would not allow him to breathe a word respecting the date of their wedding, and he knew (though she did not) it was publicly reported that all idea of a match between Lord St. Clare and the Lady Elinger Law was given up.



August was nearly over. Two whole months had sped away since that June Sunday whereon Beatrice D'Arcy confided her life's happiness to Herbert Cecil's keeping, and yet he seemed no whit nearer the realization of his dreams, when a strange chance threw at his feet all that he wanted.

It had always been taken as an established fact that Mr. and Mrs. D'Arcy would accompany Beatrice abroad; they both felt instinctively that she was far too young and beautiful to be allowed to wander in a foreign land by herself.

Mrs. D'Arcy had never left England in her whole life; but she was quite willing to make the sacrifice for her favourite. It wanted only six weeks to the night of Beatrice's debut at Vienna, when a stop was put to all their plans, all their schemes, by the sudden illness of the kindly musician.

There was no cause for anxiety—much for thankfulness; given an implicit obedience to the medical directions, and in due time he would be well. He had prospered so extremely in the last eighteen months, Mr. Gordon's *douceur* for the introduction of Beatrice had been so liberal that he had no occasion to fear pecuniary difficulties. His illness had but one painful result—it was impossible for him to accompany Beatrice to Vienna! It was equally impossible that his wife should leave him, or that Beatrice should go alone. What was to be done? On the 11th of October the beautiful English *prima donna* must appear before the musical world of Vienna, and here on the 30th of August no one seemed to have the slightest idea how she was to get there!

"There is only one thing for it," said Herbert, boldly, seeing plainly how this accident might turn to his advantage, "we must be married at once, Beatrice, and this Vienna expedition can be our honeymoon."

"Married!" cried Beatrice, startled. "My darling!" he cried, hoarsely, "you have promised one day to give yourself to me—you have promised that I should teach you to love me! Heaven knows, I would not urge you against your wishes, but if you will come to me some day why not now, when our marriage would relieve your adopted parents of a very real anxiety?"

"And you would take me to Vienna?"

"I would take you anywhere you wished to go! My Beatrice, won't you hear me? Won't you shorten my probation?"

"Give me time to think," she said, gently, passing one hand wearily over her temples. "Remember, it is my whole life you are asking for—not a week or a day!"

He went out and left her sad at heart. Her words had brought to his mind the refrain of a well-known love song:—

"Oh love for a year, a week, a day,  
But, alas! for the love that loves away."

And his was the love that loves away! Was it—could it be that when he had waited for her, longed for her, aye, and sinned for her, she would escape him at the end?

Beatrice referred the matter to Michael D'Arcy.

"I did not want to be married so soon; but Bertie is right. It does seem the only way in which I can go to Vienna without you. After all, it is only hastening it by a few months."

"And you had quite made up your mind that it was to be some day?"

"Oh, yes! I could not break my promise, Uncle Mike! I come of a race whose word is their bond!"

But straightway she remembered one of that race whose word had not been his bond; and, unseen by her adopted uncle, the heavy tears gathered in her blue eyes, and fell in pearly drops upon her cheeks.

Beatrice saw dimly that there was nothing to be gained from him in the way of advice or counsel. He thought if she was to marry Mr. Cecil it was as well to do so now as later on; but he had by no means brought himself to consider that marriage as a settled fact.

With her aunt she had better success. Mrs. D'Arcy avowed she could not bear the idea of

her pet's going among them "Austrians and furriners alone," and she thought Mr. Cecil "would be a fine one to keep 'em under."

Following out this advice—if advice it could be called—Beatrice stifled the voice of her own heart, which pleaded for delay, and when her lover returned, and pleaded his cause as only a passionate, ardent lover can plead it, she yielded the point at once, and said simply,—

"Perhaps it will be for the best; only, Herbert, remember from the first I never deceived you!"

"I remember. And now, my darling, tell me when I may hope to call you mine?"

She mentioned a day late in September, the 21st, and a great bustle of preparation settled on the little house in Colville-road. Beatrice would do nothing herself—not even choose a gown or a ribbon. She left all implicitly to Mrs. D'Arcy, who very much enjoyed the business.

The wedding was to be perfectly quiet, and not a single stranger guest, unless, indeed, Herbert should elect to have a best groomsman.

Beatrice eschewed bridesmaids. All the assistance she needed in holding her gloves would come from the willing fingers of her adopted aunt.

As to the girl herself, as the weeks flew on, and the wedding-day itself drew near, she felt almost torn in two. She felt, I say, as if she had two selves, two beings, each with a separate set of interests, of hopes and fears.

Beatrice, the lonely wanderer, the *prima donna* clung with tender friendship to the brave man who loved her so dearly; she meant to devote her whole life to making him happy; but the other self, the orphan daughter of Lord St. Clare, the girl Dora Clifford looked forward to her wedding-day with passionate regret, and eyes blinded with tears, for to her the old love was warm and strong still. She knew full well, such as it was, it would be the love of her life.

One uncomfortable half-hour was inflicted by fate on the bridegroom-elect. One day, as he was sitting alone in his study, he found himself confronted with the Earl of St. Clare.

"And so you are to be married in a week, old fellow, and never let me know," began Alan, in a tone of honest reproach; "such friends as we have been, too! Well, I did not expect this of you."

Herbert writhed. He knew the words were not spoken unkindly, but in all simplicity of cordial good faith. He knew all this, I say; but he also knew that he had injured Alan as intensely as any one can make injure another, and the very consciousness of this made him shrink from the Earl's offered hand.

"Come!" cried Alan, "surely her influence has not already blotted out our years of friendship? I know your future wife has little regard for me; that in her eyes, from some unknown reason, I am a monster of iniquity, but that need make no difference between you and me."

"No!"

"You know I was mad enough once to believe I could win the prize all London was striving for. I had to yield and confess my failure, but I would rather give her up to you, old fellow, than to any other man in the world."

His hand was still outstretched, it was impossible longer to seem not to see it. So with a return of that Judas feeling he had felt once before, Herbert Cecil shook it, and then, without a word of farewell, his friend went him.

Once more, and only once, were these two to meet again, and that meeting was not far distant. The shadow of its gloom was on both their hearts then; for left alone, strong man though he was, Herbert Cecil buried his face in his hands and wept like a woman over the bitter treachery, the cruel perfidy, he had shown to his life-long friend. He regretted it now, but a time was coming when he would have given the whole world just to blot out that one dark spot.

(To be continued.)

## PUT TO THE PROOF.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

VASHTI slipped her hand in Mark's, and leant forward in a listening attitude; her eyes shone like stars, her lips parted that the quick breath might come more freely. And Mark, drawing closer, said, "My plan is to go to Germany, hunt up all evidences about that unfortunate affair of Percy's, and see if, after all, that man has the power he boasts. Somehow I don't fancy he has; there may be witnesses on Percy's side. It ought to have been inquired into long ago; the time lost may have put insurmountable obstacles in the way. Oh! I wish you had trusted me with the secret before, poor child, I might have spared us both much suffering. 'Tis torture to think of you in that man's power; it maddens me to think you have given him the right to love you. Tell me, has he dared to take you in his arms to kiss? If he has I believe I shall kill him!"

"He has not, darling, I would not let him. Besides, I do not think he really cares for me; he cares for the connection I can bring him; cares a little for my good looks—such as misery has left me; cares, too, for what little fortune I can bring. And yet I don't believe he needs it, for that German paper spoke of him as being wealthy enough to spend large sums in charity!"

"Carl Gonther spend large sums in charity? What humbug! Where did you glean such improbable tidings, pet? Carl Gonther is known about town as a man who lives up to his income. As to charity, the extent of his charity would be to throw a penny to a well-cursed beggar! Tell me, what made you imagine Gonther charitable?"

"A German paper Rex translated to me. Wait a second, I will show it to you; I have it in my desk."

"Do, dear; but I am afraid it will prove only that the Major's German is as bad as my own."

Vashti opened a handsome desk that stood on a table near her, and handed Mark the paper.

He took it from her, and scanned the portrait eagerly. It was unmistakably Carl, but Carl seen through rose-coloured spectacles.

"I will not stop to read it now, darling, because I cannot spare a moment from you. Tell me, my own dear little girl, how the time has passed that has faded the roses in these cheeks."

He touched her face softly; his very touch seemed a caress; it brought back the bloom to Vashti's face and the smile to her lips.

She pressed a kiss upon the hand she loved so well and said, "Mark, can you forgive me and love me again?"

"My darling, I have never left off loving you, and never can; but 'tis a little hard to forgive your want of confidence."

"Mark, the secret was not mine, or I could not have kept it from you! But for poor Percy's sake you must see that we did all for the best."

"For Percy's sake as well as my own, I will see if I can't do better. After to-night I must not see you till I can free you from your enforced engagement. For your own sake this will be right; and you must not let Gonther suspect that anyone is working against him. I shall settle up my business respecting my poor aunt's affairs, and then start at once for Germany, taking with me a detective whose skill I can trust. Say nothing to anyone of our plans, but wait and hope, and try to get well for my sake. Ah! my darling, what should I do if I lost you?"

"Find someone worthier to love, perhaps!"

"Impossible! you know you are the one woman in the world to me—the only woman I will call wife!"

With passionate tenderness he clasped her to him, raining a storm of kisses on her quivering lips.

Vashti felt overpowered by unexpected

happiness. Hope had taken root in her heart afresh; she had unquestioning faith in her lover's power; he was so strong, so true, so steadfast! Her Greatheart could not fail; she felt as sure of release now as she had formerly done of defeat. She wished she had told Mark all before; as he said, had she done so, much suffering might have been spared. But she knew—

"As gold must be tried by fire,  
So the heart must be tried by pain."

And she felt that their hearts were purified by the cleansing fire of suffering. As health would be unvalued but for sickness, happiness unvalued but for misery, so would faith and love lose charm were they never put to the proof. Like a weary child in its mother's arms she lay with closed eyes upon her Greatheart's breast. And she lay there, but the ghost of the bright and beautiful girl he had first loved. Mark's love grew into gigantic power, because he knew her need of it, and felt she depended upon him for happiness.

Never in after life did either forget that hour of reunion—the heaven of happiness—that enfolded them as in a glory, lighted their lives for ever!

Outside the wind howled, and the driving sleet beat angrily against the widow-pane, but there was peace within—peace that rested Vashti's tortured heart—tranquillized Mark's stormy spirit. To lie thus cradled in her Greatheart's arms was bliss beyond compare to Vashti. To hold her against his heart, and know her his very own again, was worth the best life has to give to Mark.

"Darling, I must be going, 'tis getting late. Miss Gilbert will return, and I am in no mood for meeting even such a gentle stranger. I want to take my happiness away, and hug it to my heart and say, 'My love is true, my Vashti is my own!' No breath must come between me and the image of you that is engraved upon my heart. I could hate the very air if I thought it could steal the sweetness your kisses have left upon my lips. 'Tis like wrenching my soul from my body to part from you, heart of my life, life of my soul. Yet I must go, dear, and while your pure prayers speed Mark's quest, he will have no fear of failure or defeat. Wish me God-speed, darling, with your arms clasped so about my neck. Do you remember our first parting? I left you with the sunlight in your eyes then, and now there are great aching tears. You gave me a sprig of speedwell; the true blue of the flower is as unfaded as our love, and is pressed against your pictured face in its case of gold. The little flower shall be a symbol of faith to me, and a talisman against evil."

"Do you remember the old hag who promoted our acquaintance by her roguery? She said you should be mistrusted without cause, and thought false while you were as true as steel. It seems there can be truth even in the prophecy of an evil heart. Some see Heaven's power in all things; its warnings are wafted about us like unseen wings; we feel them, though invisible. And now that we are together hope strengthens in my heart. You will be my wife one day, dear. Heaven were too kind to mislead the trustful heart! Promise to be patient, true and hopeful, and I will win your reward for you. Look up, sweetheart, that I may take away with me the reflection of the love-light in your eyes. Such sweet eyes they are, dear; grey and misty as mountain tops in early morning, but with sunlight dawning in them; dear, true eyes, they are the light of my life. What will you do when I am gone, Vashti?"

"First, I am afraid, Mark!"

"That you must not do; I forbid it. You belong to me, and I cannot allow my property to be damaged. No, lady-love, you must grow bright and buoyant again, and not make my heart ache with anxiety for you."

"Do not trouble about me, Mark, I shall be well soon, now that I have seen you and know that you are not angry. Go, dear, while I can be brave and say good-bye brightly. Do not look so grieved, your moods are mine by sym-

pathy; a word will make a baby of me, and it hurts me now to cry. Kiss me again, my king, and I swear no other lips shall blot out the impress of your lips. See! I am quite calm and brave now; so go, and may all good go with you, and win you the victory!"

Mark went out into the wind and sleet of the wintry night, but felt it not, for perpetual summer bloomed in his heart, sunned by successful love.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

When Mark left her Vashti did not sob or faint, as many would have done, but instead sat before the fire, flushing and sparkling like a girl over her first love-letter. Her eyes shone like stars, her bosom palpitated stormily. Ah! the great engrossing love! What wonderful power it had; it seemed to her to have breathed new life into her body! The azure sheen of her satin robe glistened; her white hands looked like twin-lilies. Glad exultant life leapt within her, joy had transfigured her! She again deserved the name of *Gloire de Dijon*.

When her godmother came in, aghast and tired, she started in surprise at this radiant vision.

"Vashti, have you been entertaining a fairy prince since I left you? Has the magic kiss been given that has awakened you, Undine-like, to love and life? I left you a wan, white woman, sombre-eyed and sad! I—I find you now glowing and sparkling like a dew-bathed, sun-kissed rose. Tell me, my dear, who has been to see you? I am a sentimental old body, and love to receive confidence."

Vashti knelt down beside her godmother's chair, and crossed her hands on her lap, saying simply, as though it explained all, "I have seen Mark Frost."

"Not much in that, my maid. I have seen Mark Frost too, yet I felt no magic charm convert me into beauty. I thought him a remarkably ugly and ill-mannered young Hercules. Ah! my pet, love is blind."

"On the contrary, godmother; love has the farthest seeing eyes imaginable! Love is the sight of the soul, the voice of the heart!"

"Stuff, Vashti! Love is simply a selfish sentiment of self glorification. Affection now is different; that is calm, steadfast, comforting. Away with your will-o'-the-wisp love; give me affection."

"I have, dear, the most sincere affection!"

Miss Gilbert patted the soft cheek so near her own, and sighed, perhaps in memory of her lost youth.

"Well well, we will not talk too much about love, Vashti; but it struck me as hardly fair to your play that you should entertain your big bear Mark, though I must confess I'd rather give my godchild to him than that handsome fop Gonther!"

"I shall never marry Carl Gonther, Miss Gilbert; but I must not tell him so, or he may find a way to make me. Tell me where you have been; you have been out an age?"

"I have been to your mother's, my dear, and there met a lot of old friends that I have not seen for years. There was Mr. Rouse and his daughter Barbara, who seems a sensible girl; there was also Major Paget, and the artist who painted your mother's portrait so exquisitely. Mr. Rouse has come to town about some law business. Ah! he has aged since I saw him last, many years ago. He is a good man, Vashti—yet once he did me a great wrong!"

"Oh! Miss Gilbert, that seems impossible. I cannot believe Mr. Rouse would do anyone injury!"

"My dear, if a man makes a woman care for him, then make her life by marrying another, he does a wrong nothing can repair; for perhaps he breaks a trusting, tender heart, and condemns a woman to lifelong loneliness!"

Vashti looked sorry for her friend, and said, "Did this happen to you, dear?"

"Yes, it did; and to-night the ghost of an old love came before me, and awoke an old pain."

The elder woman looked away from the sympathetic young face, and said, softly, "Ah! my dear, there is a great aching truth in the words—"

"Man's love is of his life a thing apart,  
'Tis woman's whole existence."

I don't believe Mr. Rouse remembers that we once were lovers. It seems strange to meet after so many years, old and gray. We parted in anger—in the glory of first youth. Well, I am glad to have clasped hands again; 'tis better so. I have been hard and unforgiving!"

Vashti looked up at the gentle face she had learnt to love, and sighed; she felt it must be so sad to have one's past recalled so abruptly.

"Will mamma come to-morrow?"

"Yes, dear; and with her one you will not care to see!"

"Who is that?"

"Your betrothed—the player!"

Vashti paled suddenly, she had not wished to meet Carl so soon. She was naturally open as the day, and detested deception; and she knew she must act a part to throw dust in Carl's eyes, and to allow Mark's quest to go on unhindered.

"Lord, Lorton is expected home in three days' time, dear; then I suppose I shall see you!"

"Not unless you wish to do so, Miss Gilbert. I have angered my step-father by becoming engaged to Carl Gonther, and it would not be nice to be in the same house with him. When he is angry he can be very testy, and I am too fond of him to take his anger quietly, though I know in his eyes I deserve it!"

"Well, my dear, I too am at a loss to account for a sensible, true-hearted girl like yourself consenting to be engaged to one man while caring for another. But I will not question you. Whatever your fault, it has brought its own punishment, for I know it is torture to you to meet the man who, according to public report, is soon to be your husband. Go to bed, dear, and keep your roses fresh for to-morrow."

"I wish there was no to-morrow! I wish I could sleep till Mark could free me from my bitter bondage."

"Wishes are useless, Vashti; courage alone can conquer difficulty!"

Miss Gilbert liked five o'clock tea; perhaps because she possessed a valuable set of real old willow-pattern china, a complete set of apostle spoons, and a quaint old silver tea-pot, that was a triumph of art. Then too, she liked to brew the tea herself; and the sound of the water boiling in the bright copper kettle was very home-like and comfortable. Miss Gilbert had not gone in for old-new apothecary, so her drawing-room was bright with crimson velvet and gold. A few rare pictures and quaint mirrors adorned the walls; bright Turkey carpet covered the floor, and a harp that she could play to perfection stood in a corner close to a grand piano of sweet tone, which was open, with a pile of music on the top. Miss Gilbert was a comely picture herself as she stood in the deep bay window, chirping to a pet bird that hopped about in a gilded cage like a ball of flaxen silk, fresh from the silkworm.

Miss Gilbert was of *petite* proportions, plump and well preserved, her soft brown hair neatly braided beneath a real lace cap had but few silver threads; her soft brown eyes sparkled with excitement, and a faint flush brightened her face. She wore a dress of rich dove-coloured satin, made very plainly; in fact, there had rarely been seen a sweeter old maid. So thought Vashti as she entered the bright room, trailing behind her a train of dark brown velvet slashed with gold-coloured satin. Miss Gilbert lifted her hands in amazement at the girl's splendour.

"Do you wish to awe your admirer into abject silence by your severe splendour? Really you look very charming and artistic, but I like you best in your straight white gowns, with only the bloom of your face, and



the bronze of your hair for colour. I hear the carriage; it must be your mother!"

She was right. It was Lady Lexton who entered, accompanied by Barbara Rouse, the Rector, and Carl Gonthar!

"I am so glad to see you, mamma, dear!" said Vashti, lifting her face to her mother's lovingly.

Lady Lexton put her arms about her, and said, fervently, "So am I to see you, darling. I have missed you terribly. But you look better; the quiet here has done you good, so I am glad I spared you to Miss Gilbert!"

Vashti gave her hand to Carl coldly, then left him to have a chat with her old friend Barbara, who had a lot to tell her about Balmfield.

While the girls chatted, Miss Gilbert prepared to be pleasant to the Rector, who, seeing her so kind and comely, in such a homely way, found himself smiling at times, and positively grew bashful when he found his old sweetheart blushing—for old maids can blush just as charmingly as young maidens; and the change it makes in them is more surprising, for it looks as if their youth faded back to tell that, though the hair might be grey, the heart was still young.

The Rector found himself hugely interested in watching the graceful little lady engaged in the pleasing task of distributing tea; and Vashti smiled to see how his attention flattered the little lady.

Carl, who was impatient at not being able to get Vashti all to himself, brought her a cup of tea, and sat down beside her, saying, "I dropped a paper at Lady Lexton's the last time I saw you there; she tells me you took it away with you."

"So I did, but as I could not read German, it has been an unprofitable possession. The artist who did that picture of you must have liked you immensely; it flatters you very much!"

"Do you think so? I rather like it myself. Will you let me have the paper, dear?"

"Yes, but I can't do so now, I have lent it to a friend. When it is returned I will restore it. I am sorry I lent it, if you are vexed."

"Not at all; on the contrary, I am flattered!"

But Carl bit his lips savagely as he spoke, and Vashti fancied he seemed troubled about the delay; some instinct seemed to warn him that there was mischief working against him. Vashti wondered how it would all end.

Lady Lexton called Vashti to her, saying, "Vashti, I am going to give a fancy dress ball in a few weeks; what will you wear? 'Tis to be a tremendous affair. I shall go as Mary Queen of Scots, Lord Lexton as Darnley. Rex says he shall go as Mephistopheles, and Bab intends going as a nun."

Mr. Rouse held up his hand in protest, and said, "Really we must not wait for the ball, Lady Lexton; such things are not at all in our line!"

Rex made a comical grimace at Bab, and said, "Oh! you must stay, sir; and I hear Lady Lexton intends to persuade you to go as Friar John and Bab as Maid Marian!"

Mr. Rouse shook his head, and drank his tea in silence.

Bab said that if he went home before the ball he should go alone, for she intended to see a grand assembly for once in her life.

"Of course you will come, Mr. Gonthar?" said Lady Lexton. Carl bowed and declared he should be only too delighted.

"I shall go as Faust," he said; "and if I can persuade Miss Paget she shall be Marguerite."

Vashti smiled coldly, saying he must settle that with her mother, for if she had to be bothered about her dress she should not care to go.

Lady Lexton looked thoughtful a second, then said, "Really you would make a most charming Gretchen, child, and I think you cannot do better than to choose that costume. You have the right sort of hair, and the skirts of pale blue will suit you. Of course the dress

shall be quite perfect! I mean to make Miss Gilbert come, so you must talk to her about her dress."

"If I go it will be as a bathing woman, a cook, or a Lady Abbess," said Miss Gilbert, with a smile.

"Be a Lady Abbess by all means, Miss Gilbert, and then I shall not be the only blot upon the brightness of the ball," said Barbara.

"You a blot, indeed!" said Rex. "I mean you to be a shining light, I assure you!"

Bab blushed, Rex was getting very matterful; and somehow she liked it.

"Really, the ball is so far off at present that it is hardly worth while troubling about it yet!" said Vashti, trying to soothe her temper.

"Indeed there will not be any too much time to arrange things nicely. I mean my ball to be the success of the season. I shall not hold it at home, it will cost the house so; and I have decided. I shall give the ball at a hotel, or rather ball-room."

"Very sensible of you, my dear!" said Miss Gilbert, coldly. Indeed, she had her younger days had often sighed over the effects of a frolic of this sort, in a modest parsonage-house.

After a little further chat the party left, Mr. Rouse and Bab lingering a little behind to ask Miss Gilbert to accompany them to a private view at one of the art galleries.

She accepted the invitation at once, for she dearly loved pictures. And that evening Vashti was surprised to hear her godmother singing gay little snatches of old songs; and the idea came to Vashti that it would be a very pleasant and suitable arrangement if the little old maid were to become mistress of the Rectory at Balmfield, and leave Bab's hands free to find happier work.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI.

In one of the principal streets of a quaint German town, Mark Frost stood before an old-fashioned and imposing gabled mansion.

His face was pale, his eyes anxious, for he was about to put his suspicions to the proof, and learn whether or not he could save his heart's dearest from a loveless marriage. His voice was husky, when, in good German, he asked the Dutch-looking servant if he could see Professor Gonthar.

She ushered him into a red-tiled hall, and took his card into a room, the windows of which overlooked the quay that lay at the back of the house.

In a few moments the maid returned, and desired the visitor to enter.

He did so, his heart beating to suffocation. The rooms had walls of dark polished wood, upon which were arranged row upon row of dusky volumes; a bowl of old blue delft, full of early primroses, stood on a dark polished table, a large uncurtained window framed as a picture, the shining water and busy life of the quay.

Before a writing-table which was drawn close to a cheery fire stood a gentleman, his hand resting upon the high, carved mantel-shelf.

Mark raised his eyes to the noble face before him, and fairly gasped, for it was the face of Carl Gonthar as it might have looked—

"Before the world had gained him,  
Before the Lord had lost him,  
Or his soul had quite disclaimed him."

We quote Owen Meredith, with slight alteration here, because those lines flashed into Mark's mind as he looked at the man before him.

This Carl Gonthar had the eyes of a poet—a spiritual unworldly expression—and the mouth of a sensitive woman. He was like the Carl Mark knew, only in features the colouring was quite different. He was slighter, paler, and his hair of lighter hue. As far as brute force and grand physique went he was not half such a man as that other darker, evil likeness of himself, but for power and greatness of soul and genius he was a king among men.

Somehow, as Mark looked at him, he thought

of the angel Gabriel, and fancied this man of such mould as flowered the plains of Heaven. The professor looked at his card, smiled such a sweet assuring smile, and said, handing Mark a seat, "Welcome to the Fatherland, Mr. Frost! Tell me, how can I serve you?"

Mark held out his hand, which the other took in hearty, English fashion, and held it while Mark said, in his abrupt, honest way,—

"Mr. Gonthar, I have come to ask a service of you in the cause of justice—a service it may be unpleasant for you to perform; but, looking at your face, which is like an open book that one who runs may read, I do not imagine you would shrink a duty, even though that duty be to unmask a villain, and that villain your own brother!"

The professor staggered like one who has received an unexpected blow, saying, in a voice husky with emotion,—

"Explain your meaning! What has my brother done to deserve so harsh a term as villain?"

"Then you acknowledge you have a brother?"

"Sir, I did not know there would be cause to disown him! My brother is the strongest, dearest part of myself. Herman can be rash, thoughtless—a little wild and headstrong, perhaps—but a villain never. Sir, I insist that you explain your meaning clearly; I am, as you see, shaken by suspense!"

He seemed, indeed, shaken, for he sat down and rested his head on his hand, and Mark saw that his hand shook exceedingly. Mark, who was the most restless of men, paced the room, pausing again and again by the professor's side to impress some point, said,—

"Sir, I must ask you to send your memory back to the time Herman Gonthar was at the University—his constant companion a young Englishman, named Percy Paxton Paget."

"Yes, I remember the lad, I liked him much; he was frank and honest, and a gentleman."

"Then I must ask you to recall a serious quarrel between those two young fellows, which was supposed to end fatally for one—that one your brother. Percy died, believing he bore the brand of Cain upon him."

"Yes—pardon me for interrupting—the fault was not my brother's. Had the foolish fellow stayed to see the matter out, as he ought to have done, he would have known that Herman was brought home to me supposed to be dead, but that I, under heaven, was the instrument to save him. I performed a successful operation; and his betrothed wife, with devotion only known to a true woman, nursed him back to life. Then we were shocked to hear Percy had gone to his last judgment, believing himself a murderer. We were all grieved at that, and I wished to write to the boy's mother and explain all; but Herman sensibly suggested that I might be the first to bring evil tidings of the dead, and so pain a bruised heart afresh; so we left the matter undisturbed. The affair was hushed up, believed an accident; and when Herman went to England he promised to hunt the Pagets up and show his forgiveness—if they should know of the disaster—by a true and manly friendship, but it was long ere I heard of him. He loved play, and, I fear, had been led from his proper path. When I did hear from him he was a successful actor."

And engaged to marry Percy's sister, Vashti Paget, I suppose! That is the last news of him."

"Hush! oh, please hush! There is, in that little room there, the only woman Herman loves, or will be permitted to marry. She may hear you, and it will break her heart—poor, trustful, simple girl!"

Mark started, for the folding door flew open, and a lady stood before them. She was not beautiful, but had great, trusting, violet eyes, and hair the colour of ripe corn; she was dressed in some soft, deep, purple-tinted stuff, that was fashioned to fit her rounded figure to perfection, plain cuffs and collar of snowy linen lay back from her fair throat and arms. In her hand she held some lace work, the



["YOU WOULD NOT SHIRK UNMASKING A VILLAIN, EVEN THOUGH IT WERE YOUR OWN BROTHER."]

needle suspended as though she had been about to stick it into the soft fabric.

The professor started forward, exclaiming—  
"Daisy, my darling, do not believe another against Herman; if we fall him, where can we look for faith? Go away, dear; leave me to deal with this matter."

The lady smiled, but did not attempt to go back to the pretty parlour Mark could see through the opened door.

"Thanks, dear Carl, for trying to spare me this trial, but I am not wholly unprepared; a woman's heart has instincts, mine has not misled me. Speak on, sir, I am interested in your story. Does the lady love the handsome player?"

"No—a hundred times no, madam! He gained her promise only by trading on her fears. For Percy Paget did not die, and Herman Gonthar knew it, so he hunted him down, tracked him to his mother's home, and sailing under a false flag—for he pretended to be Carl, not Herman. He is a splendid actor, as you know, perhaps, and acted the part of the avenging brother to perfection. First he asked for money, only; then when he could repay that he did so, and claimed as price of his silence a wife whose beauty and high connection would open to him the golden gates of high society. You can imagine how easy it was to work upon a loving woman's fears! Murder is an awful charge to bring against a man. Well, to cut a long story short, Herman allowed Percy to escape, and claimed his wife, and unless we return to confound his cruel schemes she will be his wife; and I love her better than my life—ah! and my love is returned. This paper gave me the first clue, for I could not credit the Carl I knew with the noble deeds described here."

Quite cold and apparently unmoved, the girl called Daisy took it and passed it to her guardian—for such he was. Then she said, candidly,—

"Sir, I sympathise with you. I am the

woman who was the unfortunate subject of that disastrous quarrel, but I am thankful to say I did not deserve the evil spoken of. The Good Shepherd, who careth for sheep lost in the wilderness, watched over me, and guarded me from the evil Percy believed Herman had plotted against me. This good man believed the best of me, which Herman confirmed on what he believed his death-bed, and I was taken out of temptation into this haven of refuge, a good man's home. Here we worked together, and won Herman back from the very gates of death. Gratitude, and a wholesome dread of his brother, made Herman do me the honour of betrothal, and here I am treated as though I were really the player's wife. While hearing your account of him I can thank Heaven things have not gone farther with us!"

Mark looked at this cool-spoken, self-contained girl with amazement. In answer to her speech he could only bow, and send an appealing glance at the professor, who was looking at Daisy as one who sees an unexpected sight. He appeared dazed; his lips were white, his eyes wild, and he trembled as one who looks upon a bliss too precious to be believed real.

"Sir," he said to Mark, who stood awkwardly before him, "leave us for a few hours; I am upset. I cannot call reason to bear upon this strange story. Return to us in an hour, and we will make arrangements to compass your wishes."

Mark took his hat and retreated bowing, and mentally wondering how that girl could so calmly resume her lace-work after hearing such a startling account of her betrothed.

"Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep."

When Mark had gone, the professor paced the room a few seconds in silence, then passing, with his hand on the back of the chair Daisy occupied, said, in a shaken voice, looking down at her white neck beneath its flaxen braids,—

"You have taken this last cruel blow calmly,

Daisy. You hear of your lover's falsehood, yet you neither faint or fall before it, but stand boldly up, defying fate to work you injury! Is it that you are too cold to love, too passive to resent? Tell me, child, the meaning of this strange tranquillity?"

"It means, sir, that I do not love your brother!"

The lace fell unheeded to the floor, two white hands were clasped about his arm, a face all flushed with feeling; and a pair of unabashed, yet modest eyes were lifted to his as she said,—

"Oh! sir, do you think a woman living under the shelter of an angel's wing would willingly leave it for bitter, degrading bondage, to one unworthy to have been born by the same mother? Oh! 'tis incredible that an angel and a demon could have been born of one woman! Sir, I have seen your life—'tis that of a saint! You live only to do good; your days are set to heavenly music; your noble works blossom about you, the fairest flowers of the earth. You are to me a guardian spirit; I live only to please you. It was your wish that Herman and I should be man and wife. Even now, if you command it, I will carry out the contract. But as you are strong and merciful; ask me to do anything but leave you. If you drive me out of your life I shall wither like a flower without the sunshine. Your breath is to me as the air of heaven. I ask only to be allowed to live on here—your sister, your friend, one whose blessed privilege it is to be of some humble use to you. Say, oh! my master! say you will not send me away because I could not keep Herman's love?"

(To be continued.)

To do an ill action is base; to do a good one which involves you in no danger, is nothing more than common; but it is the property of a truly good man to do great and good things, though he risk everything by it; it is the property





[WITH A WILD BEAR, "THE BEAR! THE BEAR!" ROSE TURNED AND FLED.]

NOVELLETTE.]

## ALL FOR THE BEST.

## CHAPTER I.

LILIAN'S LOVER.

"I say, Lily, I wish you'd invite Rose Langley to come and pay us a visit. It's awfully slow for me now you and Lancaster spend so much time together."

Lilian Northbrook blushed, but ignoring the latter part of her brother's remark, she replied,—

"Rose Langley isn't a nice girl, Philip!"

"That's where you and I differ," said the young man, with a light laugh. "I think her an uncommonly nice girl. But, perhaps, you are afraid of Lancaster falling in love with her."

His sister's proud, beautiful lips curved with scorn as she replied, disdainfully,—

"Rose Langley is about the last woman in the world of whom I should think of being jealous; the idea is simply preposterous!"

"In that case you can have no reasonable objection to inviting her here!"

But Philip always got what he made up his mind to have, and the present case proved no exception to the general rule. After a little more worrying on his part, Lilian promised to tell their father what she proposed to do; and if he made no objection, she would then invite Rose to Hazelwode.

"Please yourself, my dear!" replied Colonel Northbrook, when the invitation was mentioned to him; "I suppose girls always will want the society of other girls."

Later in the evening Wilfred Lancaster looked in, as was his wont, and was received coldly by the colonel, though warmly enough by the young people.

In point of fact, the master of Hazelwode did not approve of Lancaster as a suitor for Lilian's hand, and when his consent to their

engagement was asked he had very decidedly refused it.

But the state of discomfort into which even he himself was plunged after this decision was announced, and the terrible effect that it had upon Lilian's health, induced him to consent to a compromise; his refusal was withdrawn, and Wilfred was allowed to visit the house on condition that there should be no recognized engagement until he should be in a position to provide for a wife.

Had the colonel been a rich man, and able to spend several months of the year in London, he would, no doubt, have found amusement enough for himself; but money was not a plentiful commodity with the master of Hazelwode, and though he lived in a good house and owned a farm or two, he could call very little beyond this his own, with the exception of his half-pay.

His only son, Philip, had been something of a disappointment. He had failed to pass his examination for a direct commission in the army, and now he was trying to slip in through the militia.

Lilian inherited a hundred a-year from her mother, and her undoubted beauty fully justified her father's ambitious hopes on her behalf, and he quite expected that she would marry a man of good position in the county.

"I shall not see you for a week or two," said Wilfred Lancaster, as he held Lilian's hand in his own during the few brief moments they were alone together just before his departure. "I go to London to-morrow, and I shall have passed through the ordeal of my examination before I return. I carry your good wishes with me, Lily, I know."

"Yes; I hope you will succeed for both our sakes," she replied, earnestly.

"You will marry me, and go out to India with me if I succeed, won't you, Lily, darling?" asked Wilfred, as he clasped her in his arms.

"Yes, I will," she replied fondly; "nothing shall prevent me."

A rapturous kiss followed, then he released her from his embrace, and took his leave. He walked slowly and thoughtfully towards the small house in which he and his mother resided, and was nearing his destination, when suddenly he heard the sound of footsteps, and likewise a woman's voice in mingled expostulation and entreaty. The next instant, Milly Dartwell, the daughter of a small farmer, came up to him, panting for breath.

"Oh, help me! pray help me!" she gasped, and then recognizing him, she added, apologetically, "Mr. Lancaster, may I walk by your side till we come to your house? I've been dreadfully frightened by a man over there."

"Certainly, come along with me. But who is the man that has frightened you? Do you know him?"

"No," she replied, with evident reluctance; but he judged by her tone that she did know the man in question, and had probably come out to meet him, though she did not care to mention his name.

"It's very late for you to be out alone!" he remarked, as they walked along together.

"Yes, it is," she replied, promptly. "I'd been over to Inchcliff farm to tea, and I didn't come away till late, and I wouldn't let them send anybody with me; and the walk was so pleasant that I forgot how the time was slipping by. But I'll be all right now—I'm glad I met you, sir!"

"Perhaps it was fortunate," he replied, coldly, and the next moment he wished his companion in any spot under heaven but by his side; for a horseman coming along the road recognized him and her, though to make quite sure of his man he called out,—

"Good-night, Lancaster!"

"Good-night, Raymond!" was the answer.

Then Edgar Raymond went on his way, and Wilfred Lancaster quickened his pace till he reached his mother's gate.

"You will be quite safe now, Miss Dartwell," he said coldly, lifting his hat. "I don't think I need offer to see you any further!"

"No, sir, I am all right now, thank you; it was very kind of you to let me come with you so far, and I'm mighty obliged, I'm sure."

And Miss Milly tossed her head and felt that she had been exceedingly satirical.

When he entered the house, however, he found his mother waiting for him.

She was full of hope and fear for the future of her boy, who was all that she had had to live for since the death of his father, which had occurred soon after their son's birth.

## CHAPTER II.

ROSE SEES MISS WED.

ROSE LANGLAY has been at Hanselwood a week, and already a change has come over Colonel Northbrook and his family.

This change is a very subtle one, and is not perceptible to outsiders, but Lillian sees and feels it, and, worse than all, she is powerless to check the current as it daily grows stronger.

On the arrival of the young beauty, Philip seemed to consider that she had been invited for his amusement, and that he had a perfect right to monopolize her time and attention. But Miss Rose was of a very different way of thinking.

In the first place, she recognised the desirability of being on very good terms with Lillian—for she never allowed her vanity to carry her so far as to make another woman feel herself neglected for her sake, unless she felt quite certain that she could afford to despise her enmity, and in the next she determined to stand well with the Colonel himself. And in this she succeeded.

If any excursion were proposed, or if any little cohesion were to be gained, she would look her small, white hands over the colonel's arm, and looking up to his face, as though she were pleading for a kiss, would say, "Do let us go," or, "do let us stay," as the case might be, in a tone that was altogether irresistible.

Lillian stood, a few weeks after Rose's arrival, and watched a group in the garden.

There was Rose Langlay, with her yellow curly hair, her round blue eyes, pink and white complexion, and *petite*, doll-like form, full of vivacity, and apparently thinking that her whole business in life was to amuse and be amused. And Colonel Northbrook, tall, stately, handsome, with his brown eyes and dark eyebrows, presenting such a singular contrast to the silvery whiteness of his moustache and beard, every inch a soldier, and making his son Philip look like a mere stripling by his side—though he, in his way, was handsome.

The most ungraciously of the quartette was Edgar Raymond, one of the largest landowners in the neighbourhood. He was as tall as Colonel Northbrook; but he was stout, with a lumpy heaviness about him that reminded you unpleasantly of one of his own prize cattle. His hair was red, his complexion was florid, and his features were coarse; while he was loud and noisy in his talk and aggressive in his manners—though, like all bullies, he was at heart a most pitiful coward. From his boyhood he had been an avowed admirer of Lillian Northbrook; but he had never, at any time, found favour in her sight, and, therefore, she never considered that he had any ground for complaint when, despite her father's frowns, she showed a marked and determined preference for Wilfred Lancaster.

Edgar Raymond thought otherwise, however, and he cherished a malignant hatred towards his rival, that only needed a fitting opportunity for showing itself.

Despite Miss Langlay's prettiness and her evident desire to please him, the young quiver's eyes constantly wandered towards the windows of the house, and at length catching sight of Lillian in the drawing-room, he lifted his hat and advanced towards her.

Divining his intention, however, and feeling a great aversion to a *little-tille* with her persistent admirer, our heroine stepped out from the French-window and came to meet him.

"How do you do?" she said, giving him her hand carelessly, and withdrawing it after it had rested in his own for barely a second.

"Have you come over to play lawn-tennis?"

"No, I came to see you," he replied, reproachfully.

"You might have come to do both," she returned indifferently, joining the others.

Raymond hit the finger of one of his gloves and followed her—he had really come over to Hanselwood with the intention of making mischief, and he was wondering how he could most effectively set about it.

He was never good at conversation unless it was about cattle, horses or dogs, and now stood silent, big, and stupid, until Colonel Northbrook began to talk to him about the crops and the probable failure of the harvest.

But a full half-hour had passed before he could find an opportunity for saying what he had come to say, and they were all seated in basket chairs on the lawn, while Lillian poured out tea, and Rose helped herself and others to cake and fruit, before Raymond said, quietly,—

"So I hear Lancaster has gone away for good."

"Indeed!" returned Lillian, with her usually pale face slightly flushed. "I understood that Mr. Lancaster had gone to London for a week or two only!"

"Perhaps you're right. If he had been going for good he would probably have said good-bye to me when I met him with Milly Dartwell the other night, unless it was that he was so taken up with her that he forgot everything else."

Lillian made no reply. She would have disdained to ask a question that should seem to cast a doubt upon her lover; and she knew Edgar Raymond too well to attach much importance to any bit of scandal he might circulate.

But Colonel Northbrook, ever anxious to find some flaw in the man whom his daughter loved, asked,—

"When did you meet Lancaster with widow Dartwell's lass?"

"Tuesday night of last week," was the answer.

"He was here that night!" interposed Philip. "You must have made a mistake, Raymond."

"Oh! I didn't make any mistake," laughed the other; "for I spoke to him, and he answered me; and Milly Dartwell was up close to his side. I fraps he'd been saying good-bye to her."

"What time was this?" asked the Colonel, coldly.

"A quarter to eleven o'clock. I know, for I looked at my watch when I'd passed them."

Lillian glanced at her brother, and as their eyes met her proud lip curled with contempt for the man who had acted as spy upon his neighbour.

"I have not the least doubt that he met this girl by accident. It would never have occurred to me to notice, or to remember anything of the kind."

Philip said this in such a tone that Raymond—thick-skinned as he was—felt the sneer, and determined to pay him out for it.

So finding that Lillian was even more cold and repellent in her manner to him than usual, he changed the subject, and turning to the Colonel said, carelessly,—

"By the way, I'd almost forgotten to give my mother's message. She wants to know if you'll all come over to us one afternoon this week, and stay to dinner."

"Thank you, but we are engaged for tomorrow and Saturday, and to day is Thursday," said Lillian, promptly. "Give my love to your mother, and tell her it is impossible."

"Well, you can come over one day next week if you're engaged for this, can't you?" persisted Raymond. "I've got over so many things I should like to show Miss Langlay; and I bought a darning bear the other day—he's such a comical fellow!"

"I suppose you and he are very good friends,

aren't you?" asked Lillian, with such a glance at her brother that he could scarcely repress his laughter.

"Yes, rather; but Bill is such a treacherous fellow I'm obliged to keep him chained, and the dogs have a perfect hatred of him!"

"Oh! I must see him!" exclaimed Rose, clasping her hands. "I was always fond of bears. When I was a little girl I used to make my nurse take me every day to the Zoo, and I always carried a bun each for the bears. I suppose you haven't got a pole for Bill to climb up, have you, Mr. Raymond?"

"I've got a pole but not a bear-pit, and I shouldn't care to trust Bill without his chain. But you will come over and see him, won't you, Colonel?"

"Oh! yes, we will come," was the reply. "Are we engaged for Tuesday next, Lillian?"

"No, papa."

"Then we'll come that day," said the colonel.

His daughter, however, made no remark. The story about Wilfred and Milly Dartwell had annoyed rather than pained her, for she did not doubt her lover for an instant; but the whole tone of the conversation, added to Rose Langlay's gushing manners and Bill's stalling speeches, had helped to irritate her, and she had no inclination to visit Raymond Hall to be either bored with the attentions of its owner or talked to by his mother, who seemed to believe that if Lillian would marry her son she would produce a complete transformation in him.

That decided change in him was desirable even his fond mother was ready to admit, and she clung to the hope that Lillian would yet work it.

When the Colonel had said he would come to the Hall on the following Tuesday, Raymond took it for granted that the others would come likewise, and soon after this he went away.

"Who is Mr. Lancaster, of whom Mr. Raymond was speaking to-day?" asked Rose of Philip the evening of the same day.

"He is a friend of ours."

"Is he engaged to be married to your sister?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Raymond wants to marry her, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" with a long-drawn sigh. "How nice to be Lillian!"

"How? Do you think it would be nice to have a mountain of coarse selfishness like Raymond in love with you?"

"Oh no! but it must be nice to have lots of people wanting you to marry them, mustn't it now?"

"I don't know. Shall I tell you of someone who, I think, wants to marry you," and he clasped his arm round her waist.

But she slipped from his embrace like an eel, for her quick ear had caught the sound of the slow, heavy tread of the colonel, and the next instant she was by his side, talking to him while she hung on his arm, and looked up into his face as though her every hope and thought in life was centred in him.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEAR! THE BEAR!

THE visit to Raymond Hall has been paid, and Lillian breathed a sigh of intense thankfulness when they return to Hanselwood and she finds a letter awaiting her.

She thrusts it inside the bosom of her dress, and as soon as she can do so she slips away to her own room to read the precious epistle.

What a day this has been to her!

Dreaming of this letter, hoping for this letter, she has had to listen to Edgar Raymond's jokes, which were not always too refined, and to undole with his mother on many subjects, even though she could not consent to the all-powerful remedy.

For Lillian there was nothing new at the Hall save the dancing bear, which on this occasion refused to dance, but growled and gried to spring at his visitors instead, until the



feminine portion of the party became very genuinely afraid of the vicious creature.

Lilian had seen the mansion and its contents many times, therefore she had very little interest in it; but the sight of the fine old Hall had a very marked effect upon Rose Langley.

To be mistress of such a place as this was what she had longed for and dreamed of, and though, when she looked at Edgar, she could not but feel that he was a serious drawback to the prospect of enjoyment. Still she felt that it might even be possible to put up with him as a husband, provided Raymond Hall was her home.

That she could win him she had but very little doubt, even though he was so infatuated with Lilian; and Miss Rose was now trying to make up that variable quantity she called her mind to decide that this should be her purpose.

"I shall marry Raymond or Colonel Northbrook," she mused, as she arranged her yellow curls the next morning before the glass, "and I can't make up my mind which I'll have. The colonel is the handsomer of the two and the nicest by far; but then he is old, and I don't believe he is half as rich as Mr. Raymond. I wonder which Lilian would least approve of. I should like to mortify her if I could do so safely. She gives herself such grand airs, and takes such high moral ground on every conceivable subject, that she makes me feel small in spite of myself. Yes, I should like to take the conceit out of her a bit."

It was in this frame of mind that she went down to breakfast and found Lilian radiant, the Colonel placidly amiable and self-contented, and Philip with a frown on his face that looked like a thunder-cloud.

Rose seemed to take no notice of what was going on, but chatted away like a magpie, asking the most direct questions about places and persons, and sometimes startling Lilian out of the intoxicating happiness that filled her heart.

"Then Mr. Raymond is really the richest man about here?" she asked, as she helped herself to a second egg.

"Yes I suppose he is!" replied her host.

"What is his income?"

"I never asked him myself; do you very much wish to know?" with a smile.

"Oh, no! I was only wondering; but what are we going to do to-day? I should like to go for a ride."

"Very well, do so! Philip and Lilian will no doubt go with you!"

"I am not going out this morning!" said Lilian, quietly. "I have many things to attend to!"

Rose pouted.

She loved to tyrannise and to make the convenience of others yield to her own whims, and she now said in a coaxing, though half fretful tone,—

"Oh! you might go for a ride with me, Lily! I shan't be here long!"

"No! I cannot go this morning," was the decided reply; "but Philip will go with you, won't you?" to her brother.

"Of course I will!" was the ready answer.

"Where shall we go, Rose?"

"I don't know!" was the discontented response.

"I want Lily and your father to go too!"

And she looked appealingly to the Colonel. She had succeeded in getting him to accept the invitation to Raymond Hall,averse as Lilian was to it, and she now thought to exercise her power again with the same result as before.

"Yes! I'll go with you if you wish?" said her host, reluctantly.

He was not very fond of riding, and he had this morning received a batch of new magazines, which he was very anxious to dip into.

But he could not resist the pleading, pretty face, and he consoled himself with the thought that the magazines would keep.

"And, Lily! now your father is coming you'll come too, won't you?" and Rose

Langley so far forgot herself as to allow the triumph she felt to shine in her eyes.

Lilian met the glance for a second and only dimly read its meaning, but she replied coldly, and not without some surprise,—

"No! Miss Langley, I have no inclination for riding this morning."

Rose bit her lip and went on with her breakfast; getting her own way with everybody was not such a very easy matter after all.

As soon as breakfast was over the horses were ordered and the trio started—Rose looking very coquettish in her low-crowned hat, with a bright red wing in it, and her tightly-fitting habit.

It was almost time for luncheon when they returned, and found Lilian in the garden with Wilfred Lancaster walking by her side.

There was no need to ask why she had declined to ride, nor why she looked so bright and happy; and Rose wondered at the change she saw in her young hostess, and asked herself if being in love could make such a marvellous improvement in herself.

But when she looked at Wilfred she felt that he was a man fitted to win a woman's heart, and she became silent and thoughtful.

She had envied Lilian her proud, calm, and queenly beauty, and the quiet, self-contained dignity, that was so unlike her own effusive, restless self-consciousness; but now she felt that, above all, she envied her the man whose loves he had won.

Wilfred himself took no more notice of Rose than common politeness necessitated. He was glad to get back to Lilian, to tell her of his hopes and fears, and to sun himself in the sunshine of her smiles while she gave him her love and sympathy.

But Rose could not be quiet for any length of time, and her incessant craving for admiration made her try to win more than a passing tribute from Wilfred.

In this, however, she quite failed, for Wilfred was blind to her charms. She was a type of woman that he did not like, and that nothing could have induced him to admire.

The young man stayed to luncheon, and loitered about for the best part of the afternoon—when he went away, seeming to take all the sunshine of the day with him.

Very slowly the rest of the hours dragged along, for Colonel Northbrook and his son were to dine at the Rectory this evening—the rector, being a bachelor, had no ladies among his guests.

Lilian sat placidly sewing; her heart was full of happiness, and she needed no external circumstances to amuse or interest her.

But Rose was excited and restless.

She could settle herself to nothing.

For a few minutes she would be at the piano, playing wildly and recklessly; then she threw herself upon a couch, took up a novel, and tried to read.

Of this also she soon grew tired; and finding that Lilian was too much absorbed in her own thoughts and her own work to trouble herself at all about her, sauntered off to her room.

"I can't imagine what has come over me," she exclaimed fretfully, as she stood by the open window and looked out upon the trees and fields on which the grey shades of evening were falling. "I feel as though I had quicksilver in my veins; I must go out for a long walk. I suppose it's of no use asking Lilian to go with me."

She was silent for a few minutes, then she uttered a low moaning laugh as she said,—

"No, she is much too proper to go without a servant at our heels, or her father or brother to protect us. But I mean to have a run for all that, so I shall go alone."

In pursuance of this determination she put on a long, dark-coloured ulster, took the red wing out of her low-crowned riding-hat, thus divesting herself of every bit of colour; then she tied on a lace veil that, though it completely hid her features, did not cover her bright, golden hair.

"Now the Colonel himself wouldn't recognize

me," she thought, complacently, when she had finished dressing; "and I mean to go and have a look at the house the Lancasters live in. I know where it is, but I never took an interest in it before to-day."

She knew the ways of Hazelwode by this time, and thus could let herself out by one of the windows on the ground-floor, and, crossing a very narrow bit of shrubbery, could make her way into a plantation from whence she could get out into the high road.

She had no fear of being recognized, and even if she had met her host or his son she would not have cared, for she could readily make some pretty excuse for her erratic conduct; and they, she felt sure, would believe anything she told them.

But she only met a few rustics, one of whom, who looked like a farmer, as he passed, said,—

"Good-night, Milly!"

"Good-night!" she responded, for she realized, intuitively, the mistake he had made.

She had been told she was very like Milly Dartwell, the belle of Witheram, and it was certain this man at least had mistaken her for that young person.

Certain of having concealed her own identity Rose became a little reckless, and walked along, jauntily, until she reached the village, when she stood before the window of the large shop in which drapery, grocery, cheese, butter, and various articles too numerous to mention, were all exhibited for sale.

"I think I'll buy something in case I find myself in want of an excuse!" she thought.

Then she went into the shop, and asked for a yard of white tulle.

The assistant at the drapery counter was a stranger to the place, and as yet knew very few of his master's customers. But he was very anxious to do as much business as possible, and he brought out laces and ribbons wherewith to tempt her while she sat listening to the conversation of a couple of women, who were hidden from her view by a pile of coloured flannels and similar goods that stood in the middle of the shop, and divided the provision from the clothing department.

"You take my word for it, Milly Dartwell won't come to no good; she's got too many strings to her bow, she have," said the first woman.

"Lor', now, I never heard she was keeping company with nobody!" responded her companion.

"No, I dare say not; that would be straight enough, but she goes to meet a man in a velvet coat that paints pictures. He don't come honest like to her mother's home, but meets her on the sands, and by the cliffs, and that's not the only one!"

"Law! you don't say so!"

"I do say it, though. She's been trapesing about with Mr. Lancaster, and with Squire Raymond, and two or three others like 'em, and if she don't come to grief well my name ain't Martha Jukes!"

But Rose could not stay to hear any more, and as she walked out of the shop she heard one of the women exclaim in a tone of dismay,—

"Law, Mrs. Jukes, there she is!"

"I seem to bear a strong resemblance to a very disreputable young person!" thought Rose, as she walked along. "I wonder if she is really as bad as they make her out to be?"

A short walk brought her outside Rock Cottage, in which the Lancasters lived.

Night had set in by this time, and the lamp in the small drawing-room had been lighted, though the blind had been only partially drawn, and standing outside the low garden wall she could see the occupants of the room distinctly.

Mrs. Lancaster sat facing the window while her son was opposite her, his handsome profile reflected upon the blind.

The mother still retained much of her youthful beauty, but she was proud-looking

and even stern, and she seemed to be talking very earnestly as she took some papers out of a small box that stood on the table, and opening them, handed them to her son.

"I wish I knew what they are talking about," thought Rose. "I could almost believe that she is telling him something about his family that he never knew before. She looks like a woman who had once occupied a good position in the world, and he is certainly the handsomest man I ever saw."

Thus she mused while the conversation of which she could not hear a word was being carried on between mother and son.

"I am glad I did not know this before," he said, as he refolded the papers and handed them back to his mother. "If I had thought there was any possibility of my getting anything that was not won by my own exertions I fear I should not have worked as I have done, but in seeking for the shadow should have lost the substance; and, after all, it is but a chance."

"Merely a chance!" acquiesced his mother, "and I believe that what has happened has all been for the best. Your father's uncle may not have been as rich as was reported, or he may have given his money away or have left it to strangers. The chances were so small that I thought it best to ignore them altogether. If I tried to discover your father's relatives I should not have been able to educate you; and my reason for coming to live in this place was that you might be able to attend Bentham's grammar-school, which I had heard was one of the most famous in England. My means were so narrow that I could not spare any money for inquiries."

"I can quite understand that," he replied, with a smile; "but if ever I have any money to spend I will try to hunt up some of my father's relations; and now I think I'll take a stroll and smoke a cigar. I feel restless after what you have told me."

"Yes, I feared it would have that effect, and it was my principal reason for not speaking on the subject until your examinations were over."

"I only want to familiarise my mind with the idea; I shan't be long."

And so saying he kissed his mother on the forehead, and a few minutes afterwards he walked out of the house.

He did not see the shrinking figure by the wall, but made direct for the shore, Rose silently following him.

They had proceeded in this manner a short distance, the girl well in the rear, and they were descending a steep pathway leading to the sands when Rose thought she heard a singular sound that the boom of the breaking waves on the shingle could not drown.

It was the clank of a chain.

The sound seemed to come from one side of the cliffs that at this part were covered with stunted trees and low underwood, and sloped down to the steep, rugged path that led to the beach.

Rose stood still and listened.

The sound was repeated; it seemed to be coming near, and now she could see, scarcely thirty yards off, two small fiery eyes.

In an instant the horrible truth flashed upon her mind, and with a wild shriek—"The bear! the bear!" she turned and fled.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### GATHERING CLOUDS.

TERROR lent swiftness to Rose Langley's feet, and in an incredibly short space of time she reached Hazelwode, entered by the glass door which she had left open—though she took good care to close it now—and stole quickly, though noiselessly, up to her own room.

Everything was as she had left it: no one had been in the room since she went out of it; and now rapidly but methodically she divested herself of her ulster, folded it up, and replaced it in the trunk where until this night it had lain since she came from London.

Her next step was to replace the scarlet wing in her riding-hat, to put away her gloves and veil, and then she stood before the looking-glass pale and panting, her heart beating wildly, and all the doll-like prettiness gone from her face.

"How white I am!" she thought, "and how my heart beats! What an awful thing it must be to live in countries where wild animals wander about at night! I wonder if that dreadful bear has done any mischief to anybody? I ought to give an alarm, I know; but if I do I shall betray myself, and everybody will be wondering why I was in such a place alone and at such a time! Besides, somebody else is sure to meet the creature! Perhaps it is caught by this time. Mr. Lancaster, I know, must have heard my shriek! No, I will be silent; unless I am obliged to speak I will say nothing!"

Having come to this decision she threw herself on a couch at the foot of the bed, and, fearing to trust herself in the company of others lest she should betray her agitation, she closed her eyes as though she were asleep.

She had not taken this precaution a minute too soon, for almost immediately afterwards Lillian Northbrook tapped at the door and came into the room.

"Oh, here you are!" she said, as Rose opened her eyes. "I was wondering what had become of you. Aren't you well?"

"No; my head aches," was the reply.

"Can I get you anything to relieve it?"

"No, thank you. I daresay I shall be better in the morning; and I think I'll go to bed."

"Papa and Philip have just returned from the Rectory," said Lillian; "but I suppose you won't care to see them to-night?"

"No, I'll go to bed if you will excuse me. I have no doubt I shall be all right to-morrow!"

Then Lillian went away, and Rose was left alone.

As she had predicted, she was quite well in the morning, though she was rather inclined to be nervous, and started and turned pale at the sudden opening of a door, or at any sound that for the moment seemed unfamiliar.

But nothing unusual occurred; though she observed that Philip Northbrook more than once looked at his sister mournfully when he thought he was not observed. Later in the morning Wilfred Lancaster called.

"I am going away for a few days," he said, with an effort to speak carelessly.

"Going to London again?" asked the Colonel, struck by the young man's manner.

"No. I am going into Lancashire, in the first place," was the evasive answer.

Then, as he was taking leave, he told Lillian that he was going to seek out some of his father's relations.

She pressed his hand. She had absolute and unquestioning faith in him, and she believed that whatever he did was intended for her benefit as well as for his own.

The day after this Mr. Raymond came over to see them.

There was so much lurking malice in his face that Rose asked, curiously,—

"How is your bear behaving himself, Mr. Raymond?"

"Oh! I've got rid of him!" was the brief reply.

"Got rid of him! Did you sell him?"

"I didn't make much by the transaction," he laughed, awkwardly, evading a direct reply to her question, "but he was too kindly treated in my place; he was getting saucy and vicious, and I was afraid some accident might happen, so I got rid of him."

"I think it's a horrid thing to have wild, vicious animals for pets!" said Rose, with a shiver. "I have heard of people keeping young lions and tigers just as we have cats and dogs, but something dreadful has always happened in consequence!"

"That is because you always hear the

dreadful stories," returned the young squire, disparagingly; "the cases in which the creature, don't break loose, or misbehaved themselves, are never reported."

"That may be true!" interposed the Colonel, "but I confess I should not like to meet your pet bear unchained unless I had my rifle in my hand."

"No; probably not!" said the young man, drily.

Then, turning to Lillian, he remarked,—

"I suppose you have heard about Milly Dartwell?"

"No; what should I hear about her?" was the haughty reply.

Edgar Raymond shrugged his shoulders as he responded,—

"I thought you might have heard that she is missing, and it is supposed that she has met with foul play."

"What do you mean? Do you imply that she has been murdered?" asked Philip, excitedly.

"That is the supposition; but you'll hear all about it in the village. I can't give you any details."

He said this with such a significant glance at Lillian that she rose from her seat and walked out of the room.

She disliked Raymond personally, and his gossip and evil speaking were intolerable to her. Not for a moment did she doubt that he would be spiteful enough to suggest that Wilfred was in some way connected with Milly Dartwell's disappearance, but that there was not a particle of evidence to inculpate him she was quite convinced.

She did not return to the drawing-room until she saw her father and Raymond leave the house and walk in the direction of the village.

Her brother was speaking as she entered, and he was not, for the moment, aware of her presence.

"I don't know what to do," he was saying, "for I saw something the night before last that will help to make things look black for Lancaster."

"What was it?" asked Rose.

"Well, I know I can trust you," he replied, "and you shall decide whether I ought to speak or not. When father and I left the Rectory Dr. Prout was with us, and he and the governor stood talking together till I grew impatient, and walked on to Rock Cottage, thinking I'd have a smoke with Lancaster. Just as I got near his house, however, I saw him come out, with a cigar in his mouth, and walk towards the part of the shore where the marks of a struggle have since been found. I was on the point of joining him when I saw Milly Dartwell between him and me, evidently bent upon following him. It looked so like an appointment that I stood still, not knowing what to do. Then I turned back, and joined my father, who was just leaving the doctor. Now, what am I to do?"

"Tell the truth, and keep back nothing!" said his sister, coming forward. "Wilfred will be able to explain everything when he hears of what he is accused; and surely you, Philip, do not doubt him?"

"No, of course I don't; still I do wish I hadn't seen Milly following him; and now it's unfortunate again that he has gone away in a hurry—just, too, when his being on the spot might stop malicious tongues from wagging. There's the governor half believes the story against him already!"

"Papa always was prejudiced against Wilfred," said Lillian, scornfully; "but if he thinks that anything he can say or do will make me change he is mistaken!"

Rose sat silent.

She felt a guilty consciousness that this was the time for her to speak, and to avow that it was she, and not Milly Dartwell, who was waiting outside Rock Cottage, and had followed Wilfred.

But to do so under present circumstances was more than difficult—it was well-nigh impossible!



How could she account for the mad freak that had made her partially disguise herself, and go roaming about alone?

It is true she might have pleaded that she was not disguised any more than she would have been in walking through the streets of London, and she could likewise have urged that her wearing this style of dress at the moment was purely accidental; still the fact remained that she had been accosted as Milly Dartwell, and that she had carried on the deception.

"They can't hang him unless the girl's body is found," she reasoned; "and if it is found, and the bear killed her, then the manner of her death will be clear enough, for the brute can't have eaten the whole of her!"

Then she shuddered as she remembered how very near she had herself been to making a supper for Bruin; and she resolved that never again would she go wandering about alone, unless she had much better reasons for doing so than she had on the recent occasion.

It was strange, she thought, that she had heard nothing about the bear being at large, and that Mr. Raymond should speak so vaguely of having got rid of it. Surely he dared not do this if the animal were not dead or in safe custody?

Still, she argued, there was no reason why she should implicate herself in this very unpleasant business; and so she sat silent, trying to look sympathetic, and wondering whether or not she had better remain where she was or return to London.

Just before dinner-time Colonel Northbrook came home, looking pale and stern. He had evidently heard a very dark story, and he had taken the worst possible view of the matter.

He ate his dinner in silence, but when the meal was over he requested his daughter to come with him to his study.

Lilian obeyed, nerving herself, meanwhile, to meet the impending blow.

It came with more crushing weight than she anticipated.

"Sit down, my dear," said her father, handing her to a chair. "I don't mean to make any comment upon what has happened, but merely to tell you what I have learnt."

She bent her head.

Reproaches and commands she could have resisted, but this painful calmness, this proposed statement of facts struck a cold chill to her heart.

"It seems to have been known to several persons that Millicent Dartwell was in the habit of meeting some man near Bryant's Gap, which, as you know, leads to the shore. There are several stories afloat as to who this man really was—some describing him as being a stranger in the neighbourhood, and wearing a velvet hat; but one or two are most positive that his clandestine lover was Wilfred Lancaster."

Lilian lifted her hand as though she would speak, but her father said, firmly,—

"Hear me to the end!"

She bent her head; to listen in silence seemed like treachery to her absent lover.

"One thing is proved beyond doubt," continued the Colonel; "Lancaster did meet her at this place more than once. Raymond met them on one occasion, and spoke to them, and there is ample proof that both he and she were in Bryant's Gap the night before that."

"And if they were, what does that prove?" asked the girl, with flashing eyes.

"I am afraid that it will go a long way towards proving that he murdered her, dragged her body down to the water's edge when the tide was going out, and left it to be carried away by the waves."

"But what proof is there of this? Did anybody see it done?"

"Certainly not; who could stand by and witness such a crime? A handkerchief with Lancaster's name upon it was found half way down the gap, where there had evidently been a terrible struggle, and there were likewise marks of blood, while, but a short distance off, were certain things which the girl was known to have had in her possession that same

evening. Add to this that she has been missing from her home ever since, and the chain of evidence is fatally complete."

"Fatally, indeed!" moaned Lilian, "and yet I believe in Wilfred's innocence as implicitly as I believe in my own."

"Your faith is not shared by many," said Colonel Northbrook; "and I have had to take part in the unpleasant duty of signing a warrant for his arrest."

But Lilian heard no more.

Feeling and consciousness mercifully deserted her, and she fell senseless at her father's feet.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION.

MR. HORACE BROWN sat in his favourite room in his detached villa at Richmond.

The open glass-doors led out upon a lawn ornamented on each side by high banks of flowers, hollyhocks, sweet peas, poppies, and roses, all growing side by side in the wildest beauty; while at the further end of the lawn fruit trees had been trained to act as a low screen between this and the kitchen-garden beyond.

A very comfortable looking man was Mr. Horace Brown—a man of some seventy years of age—with long white hair and a shrewd, florid countenance that was not unkindly in its expression.

He was a retired solicitor, enjoying the fruits of a fairly honourable career.

There was nothing interesting in the morning paper, and he was just laying it down when a servant entered with a card upon which was the name,—

"Mr. Wilfred Lancaster."

A nod, which the woman understood, and a minute later our hero came into the room.

Mr. Brown received him politely, and requested him to be seated.

"I must apologize for intruding upon you," said the young man, "but I believe you and your father acted as solicitors for my family for a great number of years."

"Your name is Lancaster," remarked the elder man, referring to the card. "The name is not an uncommon one."

"I am the sole surviving representative of the Lancasters, who formerly possessed Holcombe-by-Leigh," said Wilfred.

The lawyer shook his head as he replied,—

"Pardon me, that statement is not correct, for I at the present moment know another member of that family."

"At any rate, I am the representative of the elder branch," said our hero, proudly, "and I am only too glad to hear from you that I have some relatives living. It was to ask if you could give me any information about my great uncle, Merton Lancaster, that I came here this morning."

"He is dead!"

"So I suppose. He went out to India when my father was very little more than a child, and fabulous reports came of his wealth and his influence at the court of the Begum of—, There was some foundation for them, I presume?"

"Yes, I suppose there was," replied the lawyer, cautiously; "but when the Begum died he married an English lady, and left a son."

"Then that is the other member of the family of whom you spoke. Will you give me his address?"

"No, I cannot do that without his permission," was the slowly uttered response. "I suppose you thought a fortune was waiting for you acceptance, Mr. Lancaster?"

"I hoped something of the kind might be the case," with a smile; "for I knew nothing of my great uncle's marriage. But apart from any thought of pecuniary advantage I should like to know my cousin. Is he married?"

"Not to my knowledge," was the answer.

"Are you married?"

"Not yet, but I hope soon to be."

"Ah! If it is not a secret, may I ask to whom?"

"The only daughter of Colonel Northbrook of Hazelwode."

"Ah! yes; I know the name. And with regard to your position, Mr. Lancaster; do you wish to volunteer any information on the subject that you would like conveyed to your cousin? I warn you that he is a very peculiar man, and as likely as not will refuse to acknowledge you."

"I don't want his acknowledgment," replied Wilfred, proudly. "If my great grandfather had left one inch of entailed land behind him it must have come to me. My cousin may be a rich man, but I am the head of the family."

He rose to his feet as he spoke. The pride of birth is often more satisfactory to a man than the pride of wealth; for it is what no power can give him, and of which none may rob him.

The lawyer looked strangely at him, and asked him many questions about his mother, and where he had spent the early years of his life, and why he had not sought his relatives before—all of which he answered frankly, admitting that his mother had only told him, a few days previously, that there might be a possibility of recovering some of his father's family property.

They were still talking when an imperious knock at the front door rang through the house, and a few seconds later the woman-servant came hurriedly into the room with a startled expression of countenance, and addressing her master, said,—

"Please sir, there's a policeman wants Mr. Lancaster: he says he saw him come into the house!"

There was no time to bid her admit the constable, for a couple of men had followed on her heels, and now came into the room.

"Wilfred Lancaster," said one of them; "I arrest you for the murder of Millicent Dartwell at Witherham. Please to remember that whatever you say will be taken down and may be used as evidence against you."

"Murder!" exclaimed the young man, feeling as though he were under the influence of a nightmare. "I have not seen Milly Dartwell for more than a fortnight, and I know nothing of the girl; the accusation is preposterous."

"There is my warrant, sir, and I should like to spare you as much annoyance as possible, if you will give your word that you will go quietly with us."

"Of course, I will," was the reply, while his pale face flushed. "I would never have left home if I had known I was suspected of such a crime. I am ready."

Then turning to the lawyer he said,—

"I am sorry to have brought this annoyance upon you, sir; but when I came here I was as ignorant of such a charge being made against me as you were yourself."

"Yes, I believe it, I quite believe it," was the answer; "it's a most extraordinary affair. I hope you'll get through it all right. Good morning; good morning."

And it was quite evident that he was glad when the officers of justice with their prisoner were well out of the house.

What a horrible journey that was to Wilfred Lancaster! He passed hours of mental agony never to be forgotten, and all the time he had the consciousness that everybody who looked at him and his companions knew that he was their prisoner.

If he could have fainted he would have been thankful, but so far was he from this that his senses were most keenly alive to every word or glance of the most casual passer-by.

But the journey came to an end at last, and he was conveyed to the small police-station at Witherham.

It was late in the evening when he arrived, and the constable's wife made him up a comfortable bed, upon which, despite his agony of mind, he slept soundly.

Indeed, he felt that the worst of this matter must now be over, for no chain of circumstantial evidence that had ever been forged could convict him of such an awful crime.

The next morning he was brought up before the magistrate to be examined, and to hear the details of the charge against him.

First of all came Mrs. Dartwell, who said that her daughter had gone out directly after tea on the day in question, and had never returned.

She wore a brown ulster, a low-crowned felt hat, and a short veil. The witness was positive about her daughter's dress, because she expostulated with her for wearing her new ulster so often.

On being cross-examined she admitted that her daughter had many admirers, and that she believed the prisoner was one of them, though she had never seen them together. She admitted also that she had been told that her daughter was in the habit of meeting some strange gentleman in Bryant's Gap, but she did not believe it.

Other witnesses were called who had seen Milly Dartwell meet a gentleman in Bryant's Gap, but they would not swear it was the prisoner.

One witness was the young shopman who had sold the tulle and lace and ribbon that was found torn and bloodstained in the Gap. He described his customer and identified the articles; and the two women who were in the shop at the same time swore positively to the identity of the young person in question with the missing girl.

Next came Philip Northbrook.

He was an unwilling witness, and he made no more of his evidence than he could help; but it was elicited that he saw Lancaster go in the direction of Bryant's Gap on the night in question, and that he watched a girl follow him, who, he had no doubt at the time, was Milly Dartwell.

Then followed the evidence of a coastguard's man.

He deposed that about twelve o'clock at night he had heard the sound of a gun, but as he did not see the flash he could not positively determine the spot from whence it came. At about five in the morning, on looking down Bryant's Gap, his attention was attracted to some feminine finery, such as laces and ribbons, that were scattered on the ground. On going to examine them he found they were torn and blood-stained. Lower down he came upon a pool of blood, and near it the handkerchief produced with the prisoner's name upon it.

He also found marks of a struggle, while some heavy body seemed to have been dragged down to the water's edge.

The tide was going out at twelve o'clock, and anything thrown off the low rocks into the water at the time would be pretty sure to be carried out to sea.

This was substantially the case for the prosecution, and the local solicitor, who had hastily been engaged by Mrs. Lancaster to defend her son, very forcibly declared that the whole charge rested upon nothing more substantial than the vaguest suspicion.

The only evidence against his client, he contended, was the pocket-handkerchief; he had lost, and surely a man was not to be convicted of murder on such a flimsy pretext!

It was said that the accused had run away to evade detection, but this could be proved to be false. He had left his house on business, and would have returned to it this very day if he had been left at liberty.

He stigmatized the accusation as the most flimsily supported one that had ever been made against a man; and he asked that the prisoner should be at once discharged.

But his eloquence was of no avail. The prisoner was remanded for a week; bail being refused.

"I don't believe Milly is dead!" exclaimed Lillian, when she heard from Philip what had passed at the examination.

"Neither do I," joined in Rose, eagerly. "I shouldn't be surprised if Milly was never near Bryant's Gap that night."

"But I saw her go!" expostulated Philip.

"Did you see her face?"

"No, but I could not be mistaken in her; nobody about here dresses as she does."

"That is absurd! I can dress up in half-a-dozen different ways. The idea of saying you recognized a woman when you didn't see her face!"

"I saw a woman, at any rate," returned Philip; "and if it was not Milly, and she wasn't killed, she'll be sure to turn up. No woman with any conscience would hesitate a moment when the life of an innocent man is at stake."

Rose was silenced.

To speak now was a much more difficult matter than it would have been several days ago when the accusation against Wilfred Lancaster was first made, and she felt that the time was gone by when she could attribute her conduct to a girlish frolic.

So she remained silent, and another week went by.

A week of agony, of alternate hope and fear, but in this interval nothing more definite had been discovered, and when questioned and cross-questioned by the barrister who had been engaged for the defence many of the previous witnesses wavered, and at length admitted that as they had not seen Milly's face on the night in question they might be mistaken, though they felt quite sure as to her identity.

But the unfortunate girl's body had not been found, and without stronger evidence it was urged that the accused ought no longer to be kept in custody.

The bench was obstinate, however, and Wilfred Lancaster was again remanded for a week.

"I don't feel as though I care what happens to me," the young man said, despondingly, as Lillian and his mother tried to console him after this second remand. "I was so full of hope for the future before this blow came! and now I shall be a tainted man for the rest of my life, be it a long or a short one! You had best say good-bye to me, Lillian, and try to forget me!"

"I shall never forget you, Wilfred, and I will never give you up so long as I live!" replied the girl, fervently. "If either of us fail in the promise we made to each other it will be you! I shall never change!"

He pressed her white hand to his lips. Then he said,—

"Your devotion is pure and unselfish, my darling, but I ought not to take advantage of it. I have no fear for my life in this matter, but my prospects are permanently blighted! My obtaining an appointment in India is now more than doubtful, and I shall always be pointed at as the man against whom a charge of murder was made!"

"Don't take such a gloomy view of the future, my son!" said his mother, gently. "but try to believe that whatever happens to you is for the best! It is a hard lesson to learn, but I have always found that the darkest cloud had a silver lining!"

He smiled sadly. He had no desire to add to their depression by speaking of his own forebodings; but he, for his own part, felt like a man stricken with some fatal malady, from which recovery was impossible.

Soon after this they left him, and then, woman-like, they tried to soothe and cheer each other, though both of them realized with bitter certainty that, whatever else happened, social ruin was inevitable!

When Lillian reached her home she found her father looking very stern and angry.

"I hoped you would have had the good taste to remain at home and not have publicly identified yourself with a man to whom such a serious crime is imputed," he said, severely; "but, since you have shown so little consideration for yourself and for me, I must insist that you will hold no further communication with him!"

"Don't lay such a command upon me, papa," she replied, quietly, "because I shall not obey it. So long as I live I shall be true to Wilfred, and whenever he asks me to marry him I will

do so! If, after saying this, you wish me to leave your house I will do so!"

"And where will you go?" he demanded, frightened by her dreary calmness.

"To his mother," was the reply. "She will receive me as a daughter."

Colonel Northbrook bit his lip savagely. He knew his daughter well enough to be sure that she would keep her word; and, besides wishing to avoid a scandal, he had another reason for desiring that she should not leave his house at the present time.

Rose Langley had promised to marry him, but had begged that the engagement should remain secret for the present, and, under the circumstances, if Lillian left the house, Rose also must go.

So now he said, angrily,—

"I should think Mrs. Lancaster has burden enough on her without having to take care of you, and for decency's sake it is well that you should remain at home for the present."

Then he left her, and she, almost heart-broken, went to her own room.

She threw herself on her knees beside the bed, and prayed long and earnestly for the welfare of the man she loved—prayed as she had never prayed before; and as she rose to her feet a verse of a hymn that she had often sung, came to her mind,—

"O, Lord! how happy should we be  
If we could cast our care on Thee,  
If we from self could rest;  
And feel in heart that One above  
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,  
Is working for the best!"

For the best, yes, that was what his mother said; "it might be for the best." Why could she not have faith? why was her heart so full of doubt? She would believe, come what would, she was resolved, she would believe that all was for the best.

The very struggle that this state of feeling necessitated gave her a certain amount of strength; and instead of shutting herself up in her own room she bathed her face, changed her dress, and went down to dinner as usual; but there was a calm and lofty expression on her countenance that was unusual to it. It was not the dejection of grief, nor the eagerness of hope, but a certain noble contentment that lifted her above the carking cares and petty aims of ordinary life.

Her companions looked at her with surprise, and one of them with envy.

"She could never look like that if she knew what it was to be so mean and to feel such self-contempt as I feel," thought Rose Langley, bitterly. "If I had only possessed the moral courage to speak at the right time, no one would have blamed me, but now it is too late—too late!"

Over and over again, through the sleepless night that followed, the wretched girl repeated those words—"Too late."

And the woman upon whose head all the grief and misery seemed to rest slept sweetly and peacefully, waking once or twice to repeat, as though it were a promise of happiness,—

"And feel at heart that One above,  
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,  
Is working for the best!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE WILLS OF THE GODS.

THE next morning, after attending to her household duties, Lillian walked over to Rock Cottage to see Mrs. Lancaster.

She found the widow calm, and even cheerful. She was quite sure that all would come right; that everything would turn out for the best; and even as she spoke a fly drove up to the garden-gate, and a man not much past the prime of life alighted from it.

His face was pale and sunken, his shoulders were narrow, his tall form stooped, and he had about him the air of a confirmed invalid—the expression of one who is out-of-sorts with the world, and who regards even the brightest picture with a jaundiced eye.



He leaned on the arm of a servant as he came up the pathway to the door; and when the maid opened it, and, in answer to his inquiry, said her mistress was at home and asked his name, he gave her a card upon which was engraved "Wilfred Merton Lancaster."

A few minutes later he was seated in the presence of the two ladies.

"I saw a report of this unhappy business in the newspapers," he was saying, gravely; "and I likewise received a letter from my former solicitor, Mr. Brown, describing your son's visit to him, and the unpleasant way in which it was interrupted. I suppose you can prove that your son is really what he stated himself to be?"

"Oh! yes! I have all the papers necessary," was the reply.

"And why did you bury yourself and your child in this obscure corner of the world, madam? Do you know that you and your son were both supposed to be dead?"

"No! I did not know that there was anybody living who would ask the question whether we were alive or dead," said Mrs. Lancaster, slightly annoyed at the tone of her questioner; "but the reason why I came here to reside is plain enough. I had very little more than a hundred a-year to live upon, and my boy had to be educated. Bentham Grammar School is famous, and the fees are small. It was the best thing to be obtained with my narrow means, and Wilfred has more than fulfilled my hopes, and justified the sacrifices I have made for him."

"Humph! And about this other business. I suppose you hadn't money to obtain good legal assistance for him?"

"I don't think money would have helped Wilfred," interposed Lillian. "My father is very much prejudiced against him; and Mr. Raymond, who is likewise a magistrate, is most bitter in his animosity. From what my brother told me this morning I believe the case would have been dismissed yesterday if it had not been for them."

"Humph! They've some reason for their animosity, I suppose?"

"They think they have!" was the reply, while her face flushed painfully.

"Humph! We must see what we can do between us to outflank the enemy. By-the-way, madam, I am afraid I shall have to hand over a small estate which I have had for some years to your son. I can't say that I shall do it with pleasure, because it wouldn't be true if I did; but it would have been your husband's property if he had been alive, so of course it must go to his son."

"Oh, this is good news, indeed! The property did not belong to your father, did it?"

"No, it should have come to my grandfather—your boy's great grandfather. Believing myself the sole representative of the family I expended a great deal of money in making out my claim to it, and this is what I get for my pains, after all. I must hand it over to my cousin's son."

"At least you do it voluntarily," said Mrs. Lancaster, smiling; "if you had not told me we should have known nothing about the matter."

"You don't suppose I'd keep what doesn't belong to me, do you?" asked the visitor in an angry tone.

"I am sure you wouldn't."

"Still it's a nuisance for all that. However, the next step is to help your son out of his present scrape. Do you believe the girl really was murdered?"

"I do not!" said Lillian; "I believe she has eloped with somebody."

"Or been taken away against her will," suggested Mrs. Lancaster.

And then she repeated what Wilfred had told her about Milly claiming his protection the night before he went to London for his examination.

"Humph! That throws a new light on the matter. I'll have a detective down; and now

I must look for quarters. I suppose there is an inn in the village?"

"Yes, a very good one."

Then he went away, leaving the two ladies to talk together about the good fortune of which he had told them.

That was a busy week for Mr. Lancaster—he had so much to do; and so many people to see that he quite forgot his ailments, and for the time, at least, ceased to be an invalid.

But with all his fussiness he really did very little towards bringing about the dénouement that actually occurred.

As no further evidence against our hero had been discovered, even his enemies could not detain him in prison any longer; but just as the proceedings commenced a woman came into the room in an excited manner, pushed her way up to the table at which the magistrates sat, and throwing back her veil, exclaimed,—

"I'm not dead; I've never been injured. I went away of my own free-will, and I'm married; I'm not Milly Dartwell any longer, but I'm not dead!"

Then, overcome with excitement, she became giddy, and would have fallen if a gentleman-looking man, who had closely followed her, had not caught her in his arms.

She was provided with a seat, and then the stranger, who had come with her, addressing the chairman, said,—

"This lady is my wife. I took her away in my boat from Bryant's Gap on the evening of the day when she was believed to be lost. I placed her in charge of some friends of mine, and we were married the next morning. We have been on the Continent since, and it was only yesterday that we heard of the charge of murder against this gentleman. We immediately set off to remove the suspicion of such a crime from him without an hour's delay."

If anyone had been looking at Edgar Raymond they would have observed that he turned very pale as he recognized Milly, and that more than once he glanced anxiously towards the door, as though he would like to make his escape if he could do so unobserved. This was impossible, however, and he had to remain quiet while explanations were made, and Wilfred was formally released from custody, and congratulated and sympathized with by his many friends.

Colonel Northbrook was one of the first to shake hands with our hero, and tell him how glad he was that this painful matter had been satisfactorily cleared up, and to express the hope that they should see him as often as before at Hazelwode.

Of Lillian's intense joy and Mrs. Lancaster's happiness I need say little. Such contentment as now filled their hearts can only come after long anxiety and acute mental suffering.

Several days have elapsed since Wilfred regained his freedom, and during this time he and his cousin have got to know and like each other.

The estate which is to be handed over to our hero is worth little more than a thousand a-year, but it is quite enough to keep a man from going out to India to spend the best part of his life under a tropical sun.

"I shall soon claim the fulfilment of your promise, Lillian," says the ardent lover as he walks by the side of the girl he loves, under the stately elms at Hazelwode. "Your father has consented to our marriage without unnecessary delay."

The girl smiled; she was too happy to be coquettish, and she said, half sadly,—

"I am very sorry for Philip; he means to go abroad; he had made up his mind to marry Rose Langley, and she, it seems, is going to marry my father."

"Your father!" exclaimed Wilfred, in astonishment.

"Yes my father: it was rather a shock to me yesterday when papa told me."

"I should think it was; she always reminds me unpleasantly of Milly Dartwell, though Milly behaved well in the end."

"Yes! but that matter is still an unexplained

mystery. Who bought those ribbons and laces if Milly did not; and how is that pool of blood in Bryant's Gap to be accounted for? I shall never feel quite comfortable until the matter is cleared up—shall you, dearest?"

"Never," was the reply; "but it is a mystery, and I fear it is likely to remain one."

The question that puzzled and distressed Lillian Northbrook likewise puzzled a good many other people, and there was scarcely a man or a woman in the village who had not discussed the matter, and had not formed his or her own particular theory about it.

As for the young man in Mr. Searle's drapery and general shop, he had become quite an important personage from the number of customers who would only be served by him, so that they might hear once more how he had sold one yard of tulle, three yards of corn lace, and two yards of blue ribbon, to the young person whom Mrs. Jukes declared to be Milly Dartwell.

Among the persons whose mind were greatly exercised upon this mystery was Phoebe Lake, who performed the composite duties of parlour-maid and lady's-maid at Hazelwode.

This young woman was a good hater, whether she was a good servant or not, and she had taken an intense and bitter dislike to Rose Langley.

"There's been twice the work in the house since that doll-faced hussy came here," Phoebe had declared to one of her fellow-servants; "and she orders me about as Miss Lillian would never think of doing. I'd give warning to leave if I thought she was going to be here long."

One evening, just before Mr. Searle's shop was going to close, Phoebe walked up to the new assistant and asked to see some stockings.

He was untying a packet when she produced a bill which had evidently come from this shop, and asked,—

"Did you ever see that before?"

He looked at it for a moment, then exclaimed eagerly,—

"Yes, I wrote it myself; it's the bill for the laces and ribbons that were found blood-stained in Bryant's Gap."

"You'll swear to it?"

"Of course, I will; I've got the entry here," and he produced his book; "besides, there's my name on it."

"Hush! don't talk so loud. You come up with me to Hazelwode; Colonel Northbrook wants to see you; don't say anything about it till you come back! Will it be long before you shut up?"

"No, I shall have done in a few minutes, but you needn't wait for me; tell the Colonel I'll come."

Phoebe departed to prepare the Colonel for the visitor whom he certainly had not sent for.

The prudent young man meanwhile told his employer what had happened, then set off to obey the summons.

The master of Hazelwode was seated in his study looking over papers, some of which he thought he might as well destroy before he took unto himself a wife, when, after tapping at the door, Phoebe entered.

"Please, sir, can you spare a few minutes," she asked, in a tone that made her master look at her.

"Yes; what is it?" he asked, quickly.

"It's about the mystery of Bryant's Gap, sir; I've found out who it was that was mistook for Milly Dartwell."

"Indeed! who was it?"

"May I call in the young man from Mr. Searle's, sir? He's in the hall."

"Yes, if it is necessary."

And the Colonel pushed his papers from him. He felt, instinctively, that something unpleasant was going to be told him.

The young man came in, and was surprised to be questioned by the servant, but he repeated that the bill produced was the same he had given with the articles that were found blood-stained in Bryant's Gap.

"And where did you get this bill?" asked the Colonel, looking sternly at Phoebe.

"From the pocket of Miss Langley's ulster, sir!"

"Miss Langley's ulster? I don't believe she has one!"

"I didn't know that she had one till yesterday, sir; but as I was folding up her things—she gives me heaps of trouble—I came upon a brown cloth ulster at the bottom of a box. I took it out to shake it so that the moth shouldn't get in, and this paper fell out of the pocket!"

"It is singular! but is that all you have to tell me?"

"No, sir; if you remember you and Mr. Philip was dining at the rectory that night."

"Well!"

"Miss Langley wasn't in the drawing-room when tea was ready, and I went to her room to call her, and she wasn't there. But I saw on the bed the red wing that she wears in her riding hat. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but the next day it was in her hat again!"

"And what do you infer from that?"

"Why, this, sir. The ulster and the hat without the feather was just the way the young person was dressed that went to Mr. Searle's shop. Shall I fetch the ulster and hat, sir?"

"No!" sternly. "I will talk to Miss Langley herself. Give this young man some supper if he will have it."

But the young man declined.

He felt that he had been trapped by Phoebe, and he was resentful accordingly.

It was not until the following morning that Colonel Northbrook asked the girl, who had promised to be his wife, to come to the study with him.

She smilingly complied; but the smiles vanished from her face when he handed her a chair, and asked coldly—even sternly,—

"Rose, were you at Bryant's Gap on the night when Milly Dartwell was believed to have been murdered there?"

She looked at him for a moment, then seeing that the game was lost, she said, boldly,—

"Yes, I was!"

"And you never spoke of it, although you knew that the life of an innocent man might be imperilled by your silence?"

"I did not know that to begin with!" she asserted; "and afterwards I was so frightened I didn't know what to do!"

"How could you be frightened?"

"I had gone out for a walk, because Lillian was stupid, and you were out; and when I got a little way down the Gap I met Mr. Raymond's bear. It was dragging its chain, and it was just a short distance off, but we saw each other, and I believed it was coming after me, and would kill me. I almost flew back here, and I did not come downstairs again that night!"

"This makes the case darker still," said the Colonel, sadly. "Raymond said he had got rid of his bear. Were you and he in collusion?"

"In collusion!" exclaimed Rose, furiously. "certainly not; we never spoke to each other on the subject. You are making a great fuss over a very little. If you are going to behave like this when we are married, I—"

"We never shall be married," he interposed, sadly. "I could not trust my name and honour to a woman who is so utterly regardless of her duty towards other people as you have proved yourself to be. It will be well for both of us that we should never meet again."

"Very well! I am sorry I ever came here. I've been a fool for my pains all through."

Then, with a face flushed with anger, she left the room, and soon after walked out of the house without saying good-bye to anyone.

On her way to the village she met one of the gardeners, whose excited face told her that something unusual had occurred.

"What do'se think, miss," the man exclaimed, "Squire Raymond's bear have been washed ashore, and there's a bullet-hole in his skull, and he's got he's chain on him still!"

"I have no doubt Mr. Raymond shot him in Bryant's Gap," she replied, coldly.

Then she went on, while the man stood in the road staring after her.

The news that the body of his bear had been found reached Edgar Raymond that same morning; and fearing the remarks that would be made about his culpable silence, he found it convenient to have some urgent business which carried him up to London, and thence to the Continent. Probably he hopes that the whole matter will be forgotten before he returns.

Soon after this Wilfred and Lillian were married. It was a very quiet affair, but the happiness of the couple was not the less real because the bridesmaids were few.

After a short tour on the Continent they took possession of the estate near Holcombe-by-Leigh, which Mr. Merton Lancaster handed over to them; and certainly the happiest days of the bachelor cousin's life are those which he spends with his newly-found relatives.

Philip Northbrook soon got over his little disappointment with regard to Rose Langley, but the same cannot be said of his father.

Her behaviour cut the old man bitterly, and he will never quite recover from the blow.

Mrs. Lancaster lives in a small house near her son, and as she dandles a very small Wilfred upon her knee, she often turns to the child's mother, and says,—

"You see, Lillian, I was right. The trouble that was so bitter to bear at the time was, after all, a blessing in disguise; and what seemed the sorest affliction that could happen to us turned out at last to be 'All for the Best.'"

[THE END.]

## THE LOST STAR.

(Continued from page 6.)

Lady Chester's heart beat with motherly pride, as she preceded her son into the brilliantly lighted drawing-room. Oh; if Alverley would always be as he was to-night, what a happy creature she would be—almost without a care in the world!

Violet St. Heliers was there, looking unutterably charming in a simple toilette of white tulle and lace. The unfortunate collapse of her love-dream lent a certain mournfulness to her eyes, which made them more bewitching than ever.

Harold Jerthingham was in attendance, and his astonishment knew no bounds when he saw his brother appear as one of the family-party; but there was no time for explanation. Lord Alverley walked straight across the room, and begged for the honour of a dance. When his turn came, he led his partner out on to the balcony long before the waltz was finished, and, placing her in the most comfortable chair he could find, leant against the balustrade in an indolent but graceful attitude, looking down at her beauty with wistful eyes.

The softened light of the stars made the resemblance to Ruby more striking than ever, and a wild, insatiable longing seemed to rise in the depths of his heart.

"I am going to write to your sister to-night," he said, after a pause. "Have you any message?"

"Do you know her address?" looking up in great surprise.

"Yes; I found her out by an accident."

"Oh! Why didn't you tell me before? I would have given anything to know it!"

"It was her secret, and I was bound in honour not to tell it."

"Then tell me now!" clasping her hands, impatiently. "I am dying to know where she is, how she is, and if she has quite forgotten me!"

"She is rich and happy!"

"Rich! Impossible!"

"Not at all, if she married a rich man!"

"But she isn't married! Lord Alverley," breathlessly, "she isn't your wife?"

He shook his head.

Violet felt as if she would die of shame.

"Of course, it wasn't likely! I don't mean that, but—"

"Not likely; no. Stars don't willingly make their home in the gutter." A long pause. "You have not asked me what my good news is. The diamond star is found, and I felt that I must let your sister know."

"Thank Heaven!" with the utmost fervour. "Oh! Lord Alverley," her eyes sparkling with delight, "now she can come back to us, and never—never go away again. You have made me so happy, I could almost cry."

He frowned, as if the pleasure in which he was not to share was almost too much for him to bear.

"She won't be the same to you. Married women are always different to single."

"But is she married?" dubiously. "I feel so sure she would have told me!"

"Do you judge her by yourself?"

A crimson blush rose to the delicate cheeks. "That was not kind of you."

"Excuse me! I said it without a thought. I did, upon my honour! Of course, the cases are very different, and you were completely under Marston's thumb!"

She shivered.

"Lord Alverley," in a low voice, "I daren't ask any of the others, but do you ever hear of him?"

"Nothing to his good! You know what happened, when he tried to decoy you to another meeting by that lying advertisement about the Lost Star?"

Violet shook her head.

"Harold met him instead of you, and gave him the soundest thrashing that man ever had."

Her lips quivered, and the tears came into her eyes, and hung on her long lashes.

"After that we made the club too hot to hold him—the fellows in his regiment fought shy of him. He sold out in consequence, and, finding England did not agree with him, gave the Continent the benefit of his society. No doubt I shall rub shoulders with him at Monte Carlo."

"Are you going away?"

"To-morrow. Is there anything I can do for you?" bending down with such a winning smile as hardly have stolen the heart out of any woman's breast.

She hesitated, clasping her hands tightly together, and lifting her troubled face to meet the sympathy in his. "Only this, if you meet him don't be hard on him. Try to draw him back—not drive him on to recklessness and sin."

"You should ask that of someone else. Don't you know that I am one of the sinners myself?"

"I ask it of you!" she said, with a sweet smile. "Ruby always told me that you had the noblest heart in the world!"

"Did she say that?" very eagerly. "Angels are always merciful, but they make mistakes!"

"You won't be away very long."

"That depends upon how long I can manage to keep away. Don't you know that every hour I spend abroad will seem like twenty?"

"Then why do you go?"

"Ah! why, indeed! Here is your next partner, so I will wish you good-bye!" He clasped her hand tightly. "When I am safely out of the way, ask your sister why she threw me over!"

Before she could answer he had vanished into the drawing-room, and she was left with a fascinating young Guardsman, who was so well satisfied with himself that he never perceived that her answers were somewhat incoherent.



## CHAPTER XLI.

THE clock was striking two when Lord Alverley finally regained his lodgings, and sat down to write a letter to Ruby St. Heliers.

What ages it seemed since that day when he had written to ask for a private meeting, and she had been far too indignant to send him any answer!

Heigho! He did not imagine then that she would make a capital match, and leave him out in the cold! No; he thought she would soon be desperately in love with himself, and he trusted confidently to his own powers to retain her heart for ever if it were once captured!

"My dear Mrs. Howard," he began, and stopped. It seemed so strange to address her as a married woman—so strange not to put "My own Ruby!" He must be either tender or stiff—the friendly medium was impossible. "Through the confession of Anna Gower, whom you may remember as housemaid at the Chase, the lost star was traced to Frederick Godson, the kleptomaniacal son of the Devonshire farmer. I rescued it from his possession by an undignified stratagem, and placed it in my mother's hands this evening."

"I saw your sister to-night, and she is dying to hear from you. Do not keep her in suspense if you can help it, for I can answer for it that it is very unpleasant."

"Hoping to see you on my return to England.—Yours, "ALVERLEY."

Never more must he put "devotedly." He threw down his pen in disgust. What an absurd kind of letter to write to the only girl he had ever loved! He had half a mind to tear it up; but so, if he wrote another it would be just the same. It might as well go as it was. The wife of a Berkshire squire would not be interested enough in the writer to pick it to pieces. How little he knew!

When Ruby received the letter late on the following evening, her heart leapt for joy at the sight of the well-remembered handwriting. Even the absurdity of the address could not damp her delight as her eyes ran eagerly down the thick paper till they reached the simple "Yours, Alverley," at the bottom.

If Mrs. Conway had not been staying with her, she would have raised that bold signature to her lips. It was all over—the long, weary waiting, the hopeless longing! She could hold up her head once more as the stainless daughter of an honourable father! She could do what she liked, she could go where she liked, she could love with the whole power of her heart, and be loved again in return! She could see her sister once more, and be welcomed back into the charmed circle of relations and friends!

All gates seemed to be suddenly opened to her, all barriers broken down! Freed from every fetter that had cramped and spoiled her life, she could make it glorious and happy as a dream!

The colour came and went in her cheeks; her eyes shone through a mist of joyous tears! For a while she kept her great happiness to herself, hugging it, as it were, to her breast, and then she slipped down on the ground by the old lady's side, and laid her head on her knee.

"Oh, Mrs. Conway, I am so happy!"

Mrs. Conway dropped her spectacles, and looked at her in surprise.

"My dear," laying her withered hand fondly on the soft brown hair, "are you going to be married?"

"No; but I can go back to my own friends and my own people! The star is found—and not a soul on earth can look down on me with scorn!"

"I don't think any one did. But who found it?" her curiosity sharpened by the look of transcendent happiness in the lovely eyes.

"Lord Alverley! I knew that he would do it, if every one else failed!" with open exultation in her voice, which refused to be hidden.

A troubled look came across the serenity of the aged face.

"My dear, have nothing to do with him! He is a bad young man—a sad care to his father and mother!"

"Ah, you don't know him!" with a wilful shake of her head. "He has the best, the noblest heart in the world! But I mustn't talk any more, for I've got a letter to write!"

Rising quickly she kissed the old lady on both cheeks, and, crossing the room with a light step, sat down by the writing-table. For some time she remained perfectly still, her head resting on her hand, a happy smile on her lips, and a dreamy look in her eyes! Then she took up her pen and began to write.

"The Beeches, Sunnydale, Berks."

"DEAR LORD ALVERLEY,—"

"Your letter this evening caused me the greatest joy of my life. You don't know what it is to me to feel that I am no longer an outcast from my own kith and kin. The last year has been so truly desolate, that I needed all my courage to bear it, and now I feel as if the happiness of seeing my sister and all my friends would be almost too much for me. You address me as Mrs. Howard, but I assure you that the husband with whom you endow me is purely mythical—my dear friend, Mr. Mackinlay (he knew my poor father, years ago and loved him like a brother) having left me his fortune, without such an inconvenient encumbrance."

"Hoping that I shall soon have an opportunity of thanking you in person for all the great trouble which I am sure you have taken,—Ever yours, gratefully,

"RUBY ST. HELIERS."

Was it too warm, after their last parting, and his cold letter? No. His letter was only cold because he thought she was married and faithless, and now surely he would come back to her by the first train he could catch from Paddington. She had lost the evening post, so he would not get it till the next afternoon or evening. It was not likely that he would reach the Beeches till the day after, and tolerably late in the day, as he never got up early in the morning.

Utterly unconscious that as she was talking of him to Mrs. Conway, he had already started with Lord Fielding from Charing-cross, she watched the hours go by with glad impatience, for everyone that passed in its slow flight, brought their two loving hearts closer together. Not a shadow of doubt crossed her mind; as surely as the sun set and rose again, so surely would he come back to her at the first word of invitation. The stately old rooms, with the tapestry curtains, and cedar-wood furniture, were decked with flowers in every vase and corner. Trailing creepers of every variety of colour and beauty hung from brackets on the wall, and a bank of exquisite exotics, with a background of looking-glass, hid the quaint old fire-places. Ruby in a simple dress of cream-coloured cashmere, flitted about the gardens like a restless butterfly. Not a word had she told of her hopes and expectations. "It was too hot for a drive," she said, as an excuse for stopping at home, "so Symonds had better exercise the horses in the morning."

But morning grew into afternoon, and afternoon into evening, and still he tarried. A number of carriages had driven up to the door in the course of the day, making her heart beat fast, and a throbbing sound came in her ears, but they only contained grave old county dowagers—slow and pompous and polite, whose conversation in its even flow was scarcely more exciting than the continual dropping of rain. Terribly disappointed she could scarcely eat any dinner, but she struggled to keep up an appearance of cheerfulness lest Mrs. Conway should guess what was the matter. After all he might be away from home, or ill, or detained by a forgotten engagement.

To raise her spirits she read over two letters which she received before dinner (in answer to letters of her own), one from Violet, radiant

with joy, and full of entreaties that she would come to Hyde Park-gardens at once, as her aunt particularly wished to see her, and her sister was dying to throw her arms round her neck—the other from Mrs. Upton, with the heartiest congratulations on the termination of her self-imposed decree of banishment, and condolences with her mother at the loss of such a valued friend.

The words of love and kindness were very welcome, and she determined to accept Lady Augusta's invitation at once. Come what would, she must be happy, with Violet to talk to—Violet to look at, once more. The first thing the next morning she sent a telegram to Lady Augusta, to tell her to expect her by the five o'clock train, and gave the necessary orders to her household. Mrs. Conway had already declared her intention of returning to her own home, so Ruby dropped her at the Piccadilly on the way to the station. Her heart was very full as she took her place in a first-class carriage, with her maid beside her, her footman waiting on the platform, her handsome carriage, with the finest brown horses in the county, just outside the gates. God had been very good to her. He had given her plenty where she had expected nothing—He had raised up friends, where she had looked for foes—and He had watched over the fatherless with a mercy that never failed. How different was this journey to that other, when penniless, except for a half-year's salary in her pocket, she had fled from a house where she had been treated like a felon, with no hope for the future, and a thousand cares flying after her, like birds of prey waiting to pick her bones!

Lord Alverley had come to her, it is true; but distracted by doubt and fear, his love had been a torment as well as a pleasure, and she had left him, feeling that it was her duty never to see him again.

Now she was rich, honoured and respected, with an assured position, a stately home, and without a spot on her name or fame.

Instead of accepting a home from her aunt, she could offer one to her sister, where they might both live together, happy in each other's true affection, and in the power of doing good to those who suffered.

When the smoke of London appeared in the distance, she had forgotten everything else in the thought of her sister.

Poor child! how utterly miserable she must have been when brought back, a disappointed bride to the house in Hyde Park-gardens!

How she must have longed for her to come and comfort her, as she had always comforted her before, in every trouble of her life!

The deception towards herself was forgiven already—the remembrance of it was washed away by the tears that had fallen since. And it was with the old love, undimmed in her eyes, that Ruby thrust her head out of the window to see if her sister had come to meet her.

Yes! there she was! looking into every carriage but the right one, with a happy smile of expectation on her lips—a pretty, graceful figure, in a much-befrilled summer dress and small sparkling bonnet, with a tall footman standing erect as a pillar behind her.

"Violet! Violet!" she cried.

Oh! the glad look that leapt from face to face, as, heedless of the busy crowd around, they kissed each other again and again.

The maid, Marianne Simmons, who was the pink of propriety, was immensely shocked by this want of decorum in her mistress, but found some consolation in the rigid attitude of the footman, who looked perfectly unconscious of what was happening under his nose.

When the long greetings were over, the luggage, with the name of Howard, for the last time on every label, was placed in a cab under charge of the maid, and the two sisters took their places in the carriage.

They could scarcely believe that they had got to their destination when the coachman drew up at 20, Hyde Park-gardens, the time had passed so quickly in conversation. Lady

Augusta, who was waiting at the top of the stairs, received the returned runaway with open arms; whilst Sir Arthur, a fine military-looking middle-aged man, looked at her with some curiosity, as if he expected to find some evidence of eccentricity in her appearance.

Apparently the scrutiny was satisfactory, for he stretched out his hand, and shook hers warmly.

"Welcome home," he said, kindly. "We have been very anxious about you during the last year!"

"Uncle, she's rich—enormously rich; think of that!" cried Violet, as she followed Ruby into the drawing-room.

"Dear me! Has she married, or murdered, somebody down in Berkshire?"

"Neither; but somebody died, and left her all his fortune!"

"Very good of him—evidently a case of witchcraft. When we know each other a little better," turning to Ruby, "perhaps you will tell us your secret!"

"If you hadn't been the most ungallant man that ever was," exclaimed Lady Augusta, "you would have looked in her face, and said you had found it!"

"Perhaps I thought it, but did not say it."

"And perhaps you didn't, which is more likely. Have a cup of tea, Ruby; I am sure you must be dying of thirst," and Lady Augusta moved towards the small table, on which the five o'clock tea apparatus was set out. "Cream and sugar?"

"No sugar, thanks. When I have drunk my tea, I will tell you why I have come back."

"We heard all about it; and I mean to give Lord Chester a very big piece of my mind!"

"Better not, my dear," said her husband, prudently. "You might as well talk to a stone wall as to Chester. I dare say he will fight shy of us for some time. And meanwhile this long disappearance of our niece, and her romantic return as a millionaire, gives a new interest to our prosaic old house, which is proud to shelter such a heroine under its roof!"

(To be continued.)

## FACETIÆ.

WHAT is the difference between the Hindoo widow and any other kind? Anybody ought to be able to see the difference. How so?—Because any other kind of widow remates, but the Hindoo widow cremates.

SHERIDAN being on a Parliamentary Committee, one day entered the room when all the members were seated and ready to begin business. Seeing no vacant place, he looked round the table and said, "Will any gentleman move—that I may take the chair?"

A SOLDIER, when under fire in Egypt for the first time, commenced a strategical movement to the rear. "You are a wretched coward," said one of his companions. "Possibly I am," replied the retreating sage; "but I prefer being a coward for five minutes to being a corpse for all time."

An extract from the letter of a recent emigrant: "I'm workin' on the roads here at Liverpool, but I don't intend to do it long." Sure Mike Mulhoolly, who left home three years ago come next Aister, has a rich young lady to drive him around the city in a beautiful coach, and he's sittin' up behind an' his arms folded like a fine gentleman intirely."

A WELL-KNOWN actor had a horror of street-music. On one occasion the "waits" played before his house at midnight, and waited on him the next morning. They were ushered into his room. "Well," said the actor, "what do you want?" "We played before your house last night," said the musician. "I heard you," was the reply. "We are come for our little gratuity," said the melodious invaders. "Why, bless me," said the sufferer. "I thought you came to apologize!"

A GENTLEMAN, who had tarried late at his club found his wife in a high state of nervousness awaiting his return. She said, "Here I've been waiting and rooking in the chair till my head spins round like a top!" "Jess so, dear, where I've been," responded he. "I think itah in the atmosphere."

FRAGMENT of humanity, aged three: "Mamma, if I eat a lot of meat will I get big and fat?" Mamma: "Yes, dear." Fragment: "And then will my birthday come sooner, so I can get more presents?" [Here was a situation where reasoning and argument failed to convince to the contrary.]

SOME noted dairyman has just given out that the "present system of handling milk should be reversed." We do not think, however, that it will make any difference to consumers whether the man goes to the pump first and the cows afterwards, or follows the old plan of stopping at the well on the way back from the barn.

NEATLY PARRIED.—A gentleman who had been dining out the night before went into a barber's shop one morning to be shaved. He saw that the barber had been taking more than was good for him, for his hand shook very much, and, naturally indignant, he began to give him a little moral advice by saying, "Bad thing, drink!" "Yes," said the barber, "it makes the skin tender."

SOME gentlemen dining at a *table d'hôte*, the conversation turned upon oysters, which several of the company contended showed a sagacity that argued they must have got brains. A young man who had taken an unduly prominent part in the conversation, to the annoyance of an elderly gentleman, his neighbour, turned to the latter, and said, "Do you believe that oysters have brains?" "Certainly I do, sir," was the prompt and pointed reply, "since they know when to shut up."

A REAL ornament to the judicial bench—an old French judge who has always been looked upon as the possessor of an iron constitution calls upon his doctor. "You here?" says the physician, in astonishment; "What can bathe matter?" "Well, doctor, the fact is I am getting to be a little uneasy about the state of my health." "Ah! and where is the trouble. In the head—stomach?" "No, they're all right; but of late I have been suffering a good deal from sleeplessness—in court."

"I SEE that your son is out of the penitentiary," said a man to an acquaintance. "Yes; we proved that insanity was the cause of his killing the fellow, and they turned him out on probation." "How's that?" "They said that they'd let him stay out a day or two, and if he acted like a crazy man they'd let him stay out permanently. Well, he acted like he was insane, and I reckon he'll stay out." "How did he act like he was insane?" "By killing another man."

TRADE REPORTS.—With regard to articles of merchandise, we find that iron is firm, but indiarubber is a little yielding. Chloroform is still a drug in the market, and millstones are difficult to move. Oysters yesterday were opened quietly, and ultimately went down still lower. Lead is rather heavy, but "tin" is eagerly sought for. A prospectus has been issued of a new aquarium company; but the tendency is to throw cold water upon it. The tobacco loan still remains popular, borrowers of cigars being easily found.

HOW HE ENJOYED LIFE.—No man, says a contemporary, ever enjoyed life more keenly than Anthony Trollope. He was full of commonsense, yet ludicrously obstinate and perverse, roaring and spluttering, and wholly incapable of argument. Once he and party of friends were in conclave at Henley. Some subject of importance was being considered, and some one made a suggestion. Trollope, engaged in conversation at the other end of the room, at once raised his head. "I differ from you entirely," he roared, like a bull at a red rag—"I differ from you entirely! What was it you said?"

"BETTER late than never" does not apply with eminent success to the man who wants to catch the last train.

A PARISIAN jeweller has long dunned a lady of fashion for the amount of his bill, but in vain. When he rings the bell, the footman says politely but firmly, "Sir, the Countess receives only on Tuesdays." "I don't care when she receives!" thunders the irate and long-suffering creditor, "what I want to know is the day she pays on."

MODERN COOKERY EXPLAINED.—A father says to his son, whom he has gone to fetch home from school: "Well, what did you do to-day?" "We had Homer explained. Tell me, papa, is it true, then, that the ancients used to roast whole an ox?" "Certainly; and they ate it, too." "Then why don't they serve beefsteaks like that now?" "Why, child, our potatoes are not large enough!"

GEORGE II. was so methodical that, being accustomed to pay Lady Suffolk a daily visit at a certain hour, he would walk up and down his room, watch in hand, till the exact moment fixed by what Walpole calls "his dull punctuality" arrived. There is a story of a proxy talker, who taxed a friend with having slept through one of his histories. The friend declared that he could at least repeat the anecdote, and did so with exactness. "How could you remember it, for I am positive that you were fast asleep?" said the raconteur. "Well," admitted the friend, "I knew this was the time of day when you always tell that story."

THE SAME MAN, PERHAPS.—A Nevada man, who was carried half a mile by a snow avalanche, amused himself during the journey by calculating the amount of pressure per square inch to which he was subjected. He must have been some relation to the man whose wife in a moment of conjugal frenzy pelted him with the contents of the coal scuttle. As he neither resisted nor spoke she became all the more exasperated, and finally, in a climax of passion, exclaimed: "Well, why don't you say something?" "Because, my dear," he replied calmly, "I was busy thinking whether those coals ain't broken up finely enough to be used in the kitchen."

MARITAL AFFECTION.—Marital affection is a beautiful thing, and every fresh exhibition of its tenderness and loyalty affects us to tears. A wife—possibly an old wife—on a certain occasion fell overboard. The husband rushed frantically about the deck, literally tearing his hair out by the handful and crying in the most beseeching tones, "For heaven's sake save her; she is my wife!" The noble sailors thought of their own sweethearts, and ran all risks, and at last brought the poor woman into the cabin of the swooning husband. The look of gratitude gave them fully repaid them for all their efforts. Then recovering his equanimity, he thrust his hand into his wife's wet pocket, pulled out a somewhat plethoric purse, and with infinite relief, said, "Old woman, the next time you tumble overboard leave that purse behind. You scared me almost to death."

CHARLES JAMES FOX, being once at Ascot Races with his intimate companion, General Conway, missed his snuff-box. The general was lucky enough to discover the thief and seize him before he could get away. Upon this the man fell upon his knees, and with many tears besought Fox to pardon him and not expose him to ruin, for he was a poor weaver in great destitution, and this was the first offence against the laws that he had ever committed. Fox was greatly affected, and not only let the offender go, but gave him a guinea. Shortly after this, having occasion to use his snuff-box, he found no sign of it in his pocket where he had replaced it, and, turning to General Conway, he said: "My snuff-box is gone again." "Yes," replied the latter, "I saw the scamp take it a second time when you gave him the money, but I thought I wouldn't interfere."



## SOCIETY.

GAMBETTA'S house in which he died, at Vill d'Avray, is shortly, by the order of his family, to be put up to auction.

MR. FAWCETT'S second visit to Salisbury is undertaken to celebrate his father's ninetieth birthday. It is gratifying to record that Mr. Fawcett, senior, is in excellent health and spirits.

LORD WOLSELEY purposes visiting Ireland in June, when he will be entertained at a public banquet, and receive a presentation from the citizens of Dublin, in recognition of his services in Egypt.

THE Silver Wedding Presents to the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany are being publicly exhibited in Berlin. The Duke of Cambridge has sent as his *souvenir* a quaint gold sugar box which belonged to Queen Charlotte.

WE understand that in consequence of the mortality amongst sheep and lambs and the low point to which the sheep stock in the country generally has been reduced, the Queen has commanded that no lamb shall be served in the Royal Household during the present season.

A ROOM of the kindness of heart of the Duke of Northumberland has only just become known. When the family mansion on which Northumberland Avenue now stands was pulled down, ten years ago, a question arose as to what should be done with the wine stored in the cellar, all the mansions being well stocked. The Duke, having received half a million sterling for his house and grounds, did not wish to sell a few thousand bottles of wine, so his Grace decided upon distributing the whole stock among the patients of the London hospitals, the only proviso being that nothing was to be said about the gift.

A NUMEROUS and distinguished company met at the Chapel Royal, Savoy, on Wednesday, the 11th ult., to witness the marriage of Mr. Spencer Childers, R.E., son of the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Miss Florence Leslie, third daughter of the late Wm. Leslie, Esq., of Warthill, Aberdeenshire. The ceremony was by special license. The bridegroom came early with his best man, Viscount Melgund, Scots Guards, and the bride was attended by seven bridesmaids and a page. The bride arrived between two and three o'clock with her brother-in-law, Mr. G. Arbuthnot Leslie, of Warthill, who subsequently gave her away. The bride wore cream satin, draped across the front with Honiton lace, and over a small wreath of orange flowers a veil of beautiful lace was fastened to the air with pearl pins. Her ornaments were diamonds, and she carried a large bouquet. The bridesmaids were also in white, their skirts being of lace, flounced to the waist, over which they wore bodices and tunics of ivory-white ottoman silk, trimmed with lace, and bonnets of white straw lined with black velvet, and trimmed with white feathers and white satin, the strings being of black velvet. Master W. Arbuthnot Leslie, the bride's nephew, who bore her train, wore a suit of dark puce velvet, with collar and cuffs of old point lace, silver buttons, and pale blue bow at the neck. Mrs. Childers wore olive-green brocade over a skirt of satin the same colour, and bonnet trimmed with green satin and gold ornaments. Lady Wolseley looked well in a dress of black and moiré, blue velvet mantle, and blue bonnet. One of the handsomest dresses worn on the occasion was in two shades of terra-cotta. The skirt was in ottoman silk of the pale shade, the back a good deal puffed, and the front covered with fine white lace; the bodice and tunic were of brocade velvet in the dark shade, on a light satin ground, and was trimmed with chenille and pompons; the bonnet, of gold tissue, was trimmed with oriental embroidery, and had dark velvet strings.

## STATISTICS.

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.—The *Times* gives some curious statistics of the Quakers. They are now reduced to 17,977 members, or probably 7,000 families, a majority of whom, we believe, reside in Ireland, and 5,700 regular attendants who are not in full membership. They seat ten members in the House of Commons, besides being represented by six or seven ex-members, the best known of whom is Mr. W. E. Forster; and, according to the *Times*, "the Society includes one baronet, Sir J. W. Pease," and one knight, Sir J. Barrington.

DIVORCE.—Some statistics have been published in regard to divorce and judicial separation in Italy. It is now just two years since a project of law for the introduction of divorce into Italy—where, under the Papal Government, the institution did not exist—was laid before the Chamber of Deputies. It appears that the number of judicial separations applied for from 1866 to the end of 1879, excepting the provinces of Rome and Venetia, before 1871, was 11,431. The duration of the married state previous to separation was 777 instances less than one year, 2,719 more than one and less than five years, 4,037 more than five and less than 20 years, 1,012 over 20 years, and 2,886 unknown. Violence and threats were the prevalent causes of the suits, and in the majority of cases the fault was on the side of the husband, and the children were consigned to the care of the wife. In 1879 there were 585 separations out of 213,096 marriages, and in 1880 615 out of 196,738. Some strange statistics are given as to the percentage of divorces during the first year of marriage in different countries. In Roumania 24.62 per cent of marriages are dissolved in the first year, and 11.73 per cent last over ten years. In Sweden 0.19 last only a year, while 60.29 are dissolved after ten years. In Italy 6.85 per cent of the marriages are dissolved in the first year; in Switzerland, 3.52; and in France, 0.68.

## GEMS.

REVENGE is a much more punctual paymaster than gratitude.

FOOLS are the worst of all thieves; they rob us of time and temper.

AN indolent boy rarely, if ever, becomes a smart, good business man.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OATMEAL BISCUITS.—Take  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. medium oatmeal,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. flour, one dessertspoonful of baking powder; mix with 2oz. butter and half a gill of milk, made hot in a saucepan. Roll out quickly, and bake at once in very thin cakes.

COCOA-NUT CAKES.—It saves a great deal of trouble to buy cocoa-nut ready grated and dried. If this is not done the fresh nut must be rubbed on a bread grater, and dried on sheets of paper before a slow fire. Beat the white of six eggs into the stiffest possible froth; add gradually 10oz. fine white sugar and 6oz. of grated cocoa-nut. They must be stiff enough not to spread in the oven, and they are easier to shape if to the above ingredients a very little cornflour or arrowroot is added. Lay a sheet of white paper on a board, drop the cakes on, and bake in a slack oven.

SEED LUNCHEON CAKE.— $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. butter,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. white sugar, one egg, one teaspoonful of baking powder, one teaspoonful of carraways (best ground), and a little milk. Bake at once, in large or small cakes. Or,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. butter, 3oz. sugar, a teaspoonful of baking powder, half a teaspoonful of carraways, 1oz. candied peel, two eggs, and a wineglassful of milk. Bake one and a quarter hours, in a tin lined with buttered paper. Four or six ounces of currants or sultanas may be used instead of the carraways.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

PLAY.—Play, you think, comes naturally to puppies, kittens, children and all young things. Yes, if they lead natural lives. But shut your kitten for a week up in a box, without much light or hair, or even a cotton reel to roll about, and see how much it will play when it is at last free. Play is the voluntary exercise of all our faculties under a sense of freedom; where we exert ourselves because we like, and not because we must, that power is developed by exercise—and exercise only. It is, in fact, a branch of education that is very much neglected.

A BRIDE'S DOWRY IN INDIA.—One of the daughters of Meer Goolam, Baba, Nawab of Surat, has just been married, and this is what the people saw who gathered to watch the bride's dowry carried to the bridegroom's house: A cavalcade of elephants, horses, carriages and palkees led the procession. After them came a number of female servants, all in snow-white clothes, each bearing in her hands a covered tray. About fifty youths followed with rose-water decanters of silver on silver salvers. Then came five hundred coolies, some with magnificent bedsteads, with curtains, pillows, &c., others with swings, benches, boxes, cupboards of various designs, sofas, chairs, tables, and, in short, all the paraphernalia of a modern house. These were followed by seventy-five women, each carrying a tray of sweetmeats. One hundred men with cooking utensils brought up the rear, some of them carrying on their heads basket-loads of lamps, wall-shades, chandeliers, &c.

A NEWLY-INVENTED instrument, by Professor Heeren, for the purpose of testing milk, seems to work well. It is named the "Pioscope," and it consists of a disc of black vulcanized indiarubber, having in its middle a very flat circular depression. A few drops of the milk well mixed are put in the hollow and covered with a plate of glass, painted with six shades of colour, radiating from a small uncoloured circular spot in the middle. The colours range from white-grey to deep bluish-grey. The layer of milk is seen through the uncoloured spot in the centre, and its colour can thus be compared with the radiating colours, and its quality is judged according to the colour with which it coincides. Thus the richest colour stands for cream, the next for very rich milk, and then follow normal, inferior, poor, and very poor.

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."—"All's well that ends well" would be a very appropriate title for a little romance of real life which has just ended happily in Paris. The son of a rich gentleman residing in the Faubourg St. Germain had fallen desperately in love with a pretty, amiable, but dowryless girl. The course of true love ran smoothly so long as the young man's father was not aware of what was going forward; but when his consent to the marriage was asked he flatly refused to give it. A last meeting took place, vows of eternal constancy were interchanged, and the lovers separated. The young lady, deeply affected by the parting, took the rash determination to throw herself and her sorrow in the Seine; and about twilight one Saturday she carried out her intention. A gentleman walking along the quay at the time saw her struggling in the water, and without a moment's hesitation plunged in to the rescue. The would-be suicide was saved, but the most curious part of the story is that the gentleman who saved her chanced to be the father of the man she loved. The dénouement of the affair can be easily guessed. The stern parent's inflexible resolution to refuse his consent to the union gave way under the emotion he felt at the drowning accident. He conveyed the poor girl home, sent for his son, told the delighted young people that they were free to take each other for better or worse, and that the wedding might take place as soon as the young lady had recovered from the effects of her immersion in the river.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. G. (Linnely).—It is necessary.  
HYACINTH.—At any musiceller's.  
A. P. O. C.—Certainly not too tall. The lady would be considered very handsome.  
EAST DEAN.—A solicitor must be consulted. The cost need not be very great.  
A. B. C.—Address a letter to the Surrogate's office, York.  
THE LITTLE WONDER.—You probably require a course of tonics. Local application are of little if any service.  
STAMPS.—The stamp filtration was given in No. 1028, post free three halfpence.  
DOLLY.—There is no such thing that could be used with any certainty or comfort.  
L. P. F.—Two spoonfuls is correct. Two spoonful would mean another thing, namely, two separate spoons each full.  
COUNTRY GIRL.—1. Put the money in the Post Office Savings Bank. Full particulars can be obtained at any post-office in your town. 2. Fair writing.  
B. R.—The best way in which you can ascertain any facts concerning the relatives for whom you inquire is to advertise in the daily papers.  
L. B.—1. We have not the space to devote to the explanation of arithmetical problems. 2. Your writing is very good and perfectly suited to office work.  
P. Y.—1. A newdealer in your vicinity may be able to procure the book you desire to possess. 2. Hens will lay during the winter if kept warm and well fed.  
P. B. W.—It is highly improper, in fact, disgraceful, for the young lady to tolerate the addresses of the man referred to, under the circumstances you describe. She should have nothing at all to do with such a villain.  
L. S. D.—An engagement ring is usually worn upon the third finger of the right hand, but some prefer to wear it upon the wedding-ring finger; that is, upon the finger next to the little finger of the left hand.  
GLORIA.—You had better wait for two or three years yet, when, having finished your studies, you will be better fitted to contemplate the serious subject of love and matrimony.  
C. N. D.—1. The poem entitled "Nothing to Wear," was written by William Allen Butler. It may be procured from a first-class bookseller. 2. Your writing is very good.  
F. E. R.—1. Your penmanship is excellent in every respect, and in every way fitted for the business of book-keeping. 2. If you possess a thorough knowledge of the business, you will doubtless be able to obtain a situation.  
HARRY M.—Thanks for your poetical praise. 1. The birds may be fed on worms, grain, hemp seed, and hard-boiled egg chopped fine. Food should be varied. German paste may be given occasionally. 2. Yes. 3. By beginning when very young, and exercising considerable patience.  
ANXIOUS FLORA.—Female clerks are sometimes employed in large hotels, but the position is generally a responsible one, requiring business aptitude and a sound education. Advertise your qualifications in a daily paper.  
P. B. W.—This correspondent desires to know where he can find a translation of the national anthem of Poland, commencing with the line, "As long as we exist, Poland can never be lost." Can any of our numerous readers inform him?  
A. C. R.—No husband is ever invited without his wife, or wife without her husband, to a dinner party, unless great intimacy exists between the parties, and a sudden requirement of a gentleman or lady guest makes the request imperative.  
FRED. B.—It would be well for you to tell your grandfather what you would like to do, and ask his advice about it. If he should happen to think well of your desire to study law, he might help you; and if he should not, you would be no worse off than you are now.  
SEVILLE ORANGE.—1. The reason a parrot picks its feathers in the manner described is that it has been given too much rich food. 2. To obviate this trouble, give the bird plenty of soaked bread and cayenne-pepper, and on no account allow it to indulge in hemp-seed. By pursuing this course, the parrot will soon appear in all feather.  
E. R. N.—You should not be annoyed at what most boys would be proud of—that at fourteen your height, weight, growth of beard, &c., indicate that you are three or four years older than you really are. And, instead of trying to devise ways to stop the growth of your beard, which is impossible, you should endeavour to encourage it by shaving frequently.  
L. B. S.—You seem to be afflicted with shyness to an unusual degree, but still your case is not hopeless. Cultivate all the social accomplishments popular among your acquaintances, such as skating, tennis-playing, dramatic reading, and so on. Join or organise clubs for these pursuits, and even if it is a trial for you to do so, take your fair share of the duties connected with the management of the entertainments. This course will bring you into contact with young people of your own age, without putting you to the necessity of entertaining or being entertained by mere conversation, and in time you will make friends, and find your shyness insensibly disappear.

BOROW, J.—The young lady is too young to know her own mind, or to decide on such a serious matter as an engagement. Break off the whole affair for the present, and in three or four years you and she will be better fitted to judge whether you should be engaged at all; and if you are then engaged you will get along with each other better than you do now.

C. Y.—1. Arabi Bay was exiled for life to the island of Ceylon. 2. An entry-clerk is placed in charge of stock, and has to make an entry of every article received or despatched by the firm employing him. A stock-clerk is assigned to some special department, and has to keep a correct account of all the stock in that department. 3. The best manner of removing the objectionable hairs is to pluck them out with a pair of tweezers.

C. L. F.—A simple way to prepare Lyonnaise potatoes is to put a little butter in a frying-pan with a small onion cut up very fine; let the onion get nicely browned, then take some cold boiled potatoes, cut them into pieces, put them in the pan, season well with pepper and salt, and let them get thoroughly hot and slightly brown. When ready to serve, sprinkle over them some parsley, chopped fine.

ELOA C.—1. A lady who declines dancing with a gentleman should afford him some reason for her refusal, no matter how frivolous. 2. No lady, however numerous the solicitations of her admirers, should consent to dance repeatedly, when by so doing she excludes other ladies from participating in the same amusement; still less should she dance exclusively with the same gentleman, to the disadvantage of others.

## SWEET SPRING TIDE.

Within the tender, creeping grass  
We watch her shy footsteps pass,  
A freshness wreathes her maiden brow,  
When leaves are green on every bough.

She bids the sweet arbutus grow,  
The violet blue that sleeps below,  
The lily buds beside the stream,  
A flood of molten glory gleam.

The western skies are all aflame,  
The mosses tremble at her name,  
And April with her winning wiles  
Bids us awake to tears and smiles.

Oh, little May Queen, sweet and fair,  
Our voices call you; haste away,  
Come see the blossoms everywhere,  
That April left you here to-day.

Come, see the sweet and fragrant flowers,  
Gold brimmed with nectar to the brim,  
In all earth's gay and sunny bowers,  
Is aught else fairer, do you think?

And hear the spring birds raptured sing,  
And watch the growing violets blue,  
The pendant blossoms as they swing,  
They bloom, my little queen, for you.

## III.

Come, bonnie June, beside the brook  
The buttercups are blowing,  
Upon the verdant uplands, look,  
The daffodils are growing.

Sing with the birds upon the wold,  
And on the mossy heather,  
And wake a summer anthem bold,  
Within the sweet June weather.

## M. S.

S. O. N.—1. If you cannot induce your husband to remove to some place where the boys can learn trades, or a business of some kind, you may be able to persuade him to allow them to leave home as each arrives at an age when he should choose an occupation. 2. In the eyes of the law the earnings of a minor belong to his parents, and if the father refuses to give up the cattle, we doubt if there is any way to compel him to do so.

H. W. G.—1. Keep it cut regularly, wash it frequently, and occasionally use a stimulating wash, such as tincture of cathartides and sweet oil. 2. Caroline is the feminine of Charles, and means noble-spirited. 3. Keep them covered as much as possible, and wash in warm water into which a little oatmeal has been placed. 4. Spade guineas were so called from the shape of the coat of arms; they were in use before 1817. 5. By the constancy of his attention and his devotion. 6. Use your own judgment as to her conduct.

LIZBET.—When the lips are dry and cracked even in warm weather, the trouble is likely to be due to general ill-health rather than to anything which local applications can relieve. Take exercise, keep your house, and especially your bedroom, well aired and cool, wear warm clothing in cold weather, and be careful to eat and drink slowly and in moderation. It will do no harm to use some form of lip salve, which you can get from any chemist, not because such salves have any more power to heal than have glycerine and vaseline, but because they are harder, more pleasant to apply, and protect the surface better by remaining on it longer.

D. L. B.—1. If the Sahara were converted into a salt water lake, it would have the effect of making the climate of the South of Europe a little moister, and would moderate or prevent the distressingly hot and dry wind, which sometimes afflicts Italy. Some good engineers think the plan of flooding the Sahara impracticable. 2. Africa supplies many articles of use and luxury, has sheltered in the past high civilizations, gives a field already for colonization, and in the future may repeat the history of North America.

T. E. D.—1. It is customary for all gentlemen at a morning wedding to be in morning dress. 2. The bridegroom usually wears a frock coat, grey or light fawn-coloured trousers, vest the same colour of the coat, which should be either dark blue or black, the vest may be white, coloured silk or satin cravat, and light-coloured kid gloves. 3. The wedding guests do not take off their bonnets to breakfast. 4. The parents of the bride furnish the invitations, and the carriages for all the guests except those who are invited by the bridegroom, but for those he must furnish the carriages.

C. F.—The visitor cannot be released from the obligations which strict etiquette has laid upon him. The mother is likely to excuse herself. She knows the constantly expressed desire to see herself is complimentary and respectful, and as such the well-bred lady usually receives it; but should she appear and remain during the entire visit, all the same she must be agreeable to her, and ask for her every time he calls. If her presence is unsatisfactory to the daughter, they can arrange these social affairs between themselves.

W. J. R.—You have not done anything wrong in corresponding under the circumstances, and the fact that your friend was too ill to write to you, or that you did not answer his letter for some time, is no reason for breaking off the correspondence. There would be nothing improper in exchanging pictures with him, but a prudent young lady does not give her photographs about too freely. You should address the gentleman in writing as you do in speaking. If his name is Smith, for instance, begin "Dear Mr. Smith," unless you were on sufficiently confidential terms to use his christian name, which, in that case, replaces the "Mr. Smith." "Dear friend" is permissible, but "Dear Sir" is only used in letters of business.

B. W.—The mad-stone is a light, porous stone of a greenish colour, said to possess the property of drawing the venom from the bite of a mad dog or other animal affected with the rabies. From what we have read, it is a species of sandstone, and when it is applied to the wound, it readily adheres, acting as an absorbent, and only releases its power when the poison is all absorbed. In our researches we have only been able to pick up fragmentary information on the subject, but it is of such a character that we do not feel we have a right to question its authenticity.

W. D. N.—1. As you are not engaged to the young lady, she had the right to accept another escort for the evening, you being unable to accompany her. We do not think she has committed an unpardonable offence, and it is not at all probable that she will gratify you by saying she is sorry, even if she is. The trouble is, you are a little jealous, and have not the tact to conceal it. The better plan is to take her word for it that she loves you as well as ever, and do not let so slight a circumstance interfere with your enjoyment of her society. 2. You are entirely too young to marry, although in a position to support a wife comfortably. Wait at least two years.

G. B.—1. The recent floods on the Continent were caused by the rapid melting of an unusually heavy fall of snow in the high mountain regions, in which the two great rivers, the Rhine and the Danube, have their rise. 2. There are two great zones of fracture, running all round the earth, where the crust seems to be thinner and less stable than on the rest of the earth's surface. The courses of these zones are marked by lines of volcanoes and disturbances of the earth. One of them runs in a general north and south direction, following on the European continent, the line of the Andes and the Rocky Mountains. The other runs roughly east and west. As the two intersect in Central America, it is not to be wondered at that the "foo solid earth" is not by any means as solid there as elsewhere.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. B. SPECK; and Printed by WOODFALL and KNOX, Milford Lane, Strand.